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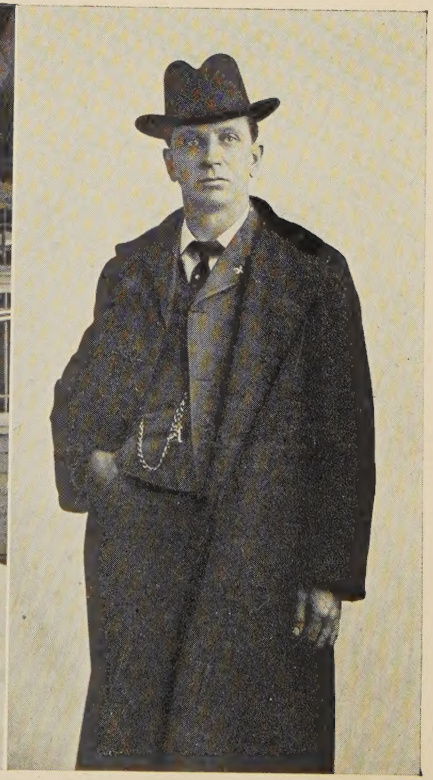

Photos from Mr. Sutton's Collection

FRED E. SUTTON

When Dodge City called him the

Recent picture. The gun is Belle

As he looked in 1880

HANDS UP!

Stories of the Six-Gun Fighters of the Old Wild West

As told by

FRED E. SUTTON

And written down by

A. B. MACDONALD

ILLUSTRATED

978
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INDIANAPOLIS

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To

My Father and Mother

PETER DE GARMO

AND

MARY ELLEN SUTTON

True Pioneers of the West

FOREWORD

On the thirty-sixth anniversary of the opening of Oklahoma to white settlement there was a great street parade in Oklahoma City in celebration of it. Leading the parade, on horseback, with their old saddles and six-shooters, was a group of men, grizzled veterans of the days when that was all buffalo land, when it was all wild country, when land and grass were all free, when only the venturesome and the brave dared forth upon the plains; when the six-shooter was the arbiter in almost all serious disputes; men who had entered Oklahoma in the greatest horse race ever run, in which the prize was a homestead; and among those men, at the head of the parade, was Fred E. Sutton.

When the parade had disbanded I said to Sutton: "Fred, the old fellows who settled this country, the 'eighty-niners, are going fast. Soon they will all be gone, and what a world of history will go out with them, untold; stories of the days when every one toted a six-shooter. Why don't you write down some of your experiences and have them saved for the

millions yet unborn? You are as well qualified as any one I know for a task of that kind."

I recalled that I had seen on the walls of his home framed certificates of his membership in the "'Eighty-niners' Association of Oklahoma"; and the "Old-time Cherokee Strip Cow Punchers' Association"; and "Payne's Oklahoma Colony"; and the "National Order of Cowboy Rangers of Denver"; and the "Old-time Trail Drivers' Association," of Texas, and other associations of veteran frontiersmen.

"You ought to write down some of the stories I have heard you tell in times past," I said to him. "The things you know about the early West and the men who made history out here ought to be preserved. Already the forms of those old characters are fading into the shadow of myth and legend. Soon it will be impossible to winnow the truth from the chaff of fiction about those times and those men. Why don't you put down the truth about it now?"

"All right," he replied. "I'll throw in with you. I'll tell it if you'll write it down."

Out of that conversation grew a series of articles,

dictated by Sutton and written down by me, which were printed in *The Saturday Evening Post.*

They attracted wide attention. Thousands of letters from all parts of the country asked: "Why don't you put those articles into a book?"

So, here they are, in a book.

A. B. M.

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HANDS UP!

CHAPTER I

WHY WAS THE WILD WEST WILD?

A BUSINESS man from the East, visiting me in Oklahoma City, was looking at a photograph of myself, taken when I was a young cowboy on the Crooked-S Ranch. I wore the usual four-gallon hat with eaves a foot wide, hairy chaps, high-heeled boots, with a dancing girl and a royal flush embroidered on the patent-leather tops of each, and the butts of two heavy six-shooters loomed from the holsters at my waist.

"I never could understand why you westerners rigged yourselves up in such outlandish style," he said. "Look at those furry leggings and the exaggerated hat brim and big handkerchief draped over your chest. You had queer ideas of personal adornment."

I explained that those were not worn for embellishment but for utility. The work of the cowboy was done in the open, in all kinds of weather. The wide hat brim shaded the face and kept rain and snow from dripping down the back of the neck.

Cutting out and roping broncs, branding, riding herd and rounding up in summer were hot and dusty work. Sweat ran into our eyes enough to blind us. There was no time to fool with taking a handkerchief out of a pocket and replacing it; so the cowboy knotted his handkerchief at the back of his neck, with the wide folds of it hanging loosely in front, where he could quickly grasp it to wipe his face and eyes, and when he let it go, it was still there, open, to dry in the wind. When the herd was kicking up a choking dust he pushed the handkerchief up over his mouth and nose as a respirator, and in blizzardly weather the handkerchief often protected his chin and nose from frost-bite.

A cowboy was often out in the rain and snow, on horseback, for days and nights at a stretch. He could protect his body with a slicker or a sheepskin coat, but his legs would be uncovered; so he wore chaps of leather or skin, with the hair out. Another use of chaps was to protect his legs from chaparral thorns and the spines of cactus that otherwise would have torn his trousers to shreds and lacerated his flesh as he rode.

"All right; but what about those boot heels, two or three inches high, tapering off to the size of a

silver half-dollar and sloping inward toward the instep?" said my friend. "Seems to me that was an odd idea."

"Couldn't have got along without them," I replied. "The first reason was that the cowboy had to stand with the weight of his whole body on his feet in the stirrups while doing much of his work, and the long heels prevented his feet from slipping through the stirrups. Another need of a long sharp heel, sloping forward, was that he might sink it into the tough sod of the prairie and anchor himself when leaning back on his lariat after roping a plunging steer or bronc. With an ordinary broad flat heel he would be dragged over the hard smooth surface of the ground."

"But why was the Wild West wild?" persisted my friend. "Why did it harness itself in a cartridge-studded belt, with a heavy six-shooter sagging at each hip? That must have been largely swagger and bluster, an incitement to mortal combat in every quarrel."

"The six-shooter was not worn as an ornament," I told him. "Nor was it an evidence that the typical frontiersman was athirst for gore. He packed a gun to save his skin. The six-shooter was a neces-

sity, a needful product of conditions in the Great Plains country between the Platte and the Rio Grande."

Now, I am not going to trail off into a maze of history. I am merely going to point, briefly, to the procession of outstanding events that girded a couple of six-shooters to the loins of every red-blooded man on the plains and in the mountains.

The history of that region divides itself into periods, the first of which was that of exclusive Indian occupancy. The first invasion of it by white men from the sunrise side of the Missouri might be termed the fur period, when trappers and hunters swarmed over it. This was merged with the era of trail and trading post, when the men who trafficked with the Indians, bartering beads and blankets and fire-water for furs, built their stockades and forts, and the trails that carried the commerce of the East with the Spanish settlements of the far Southwest were marked across the prairie from Independence to Santa Fé.

The next period saw the Argonauts crowding the plains, in the gold rush to California, and the caravans of covered wagons charting the Oregon and other trails across it; and the Mormon migration,

and the pony express and overland stage lines. In those days only the strong and the bold adventured upon the plains, and they went armed, for the Indian disputed every advance, and he was a savage and treacherous fighter.

Then came the age of the buffalo hunter. It lasted about twenty-five years. In that period the buffalo was exterminated. How many millions were slaughtered can never be known. When Horace Greeley crossed the plains he estimated that there were five million buffalo in the herds through which he passed, and there were herds like that everywhere on the plains.

Robert M. Wright, one of the founders of Dodge City, and the first president of the town, told me that in 1859, when he was a boy, he went with a train of ox-drawn covered wagons across the plains to Denver and for two hundred miles they traveled through one continuous herd of buffalo. The animals were as close together as it was customary to herd cattle. This slowly moving herd, grazing as it went, blackened the prairie as far as the eye could see. When the herd was frightened and stampeded, their feet pounding upon the hard prairie sod made a roar like thunder and the earth seemed to tremble.

Wright told me the following story:

"One night General Sheridan and Major Inman were in my office in Fort Dodge. They had arrived that day from Camp Supply, south of Dodge in the Oklahoma Panhandle, and for more than a hundred miles had passed through one vast herd of buffalo.

They asked me to help them try to figure out how many buffalo were between Dodge and Camp Supply. General Sheridan took a pencil and paper and, judging from the buffalo he had seen that day, he figured that there were ten million buffalo in that one herd. They both looked at those figures for a while and then General Sheridan said:

" 'Nobody will believe there are as many buffalo as that in the whole world,' and so they figured it again, estimating that one buffalo would occupy so much standing room, and they found that on a fifty-mile square of prairie there were five million buffalo.

" 'If those figures are correct, then there are untold millions of buffalo on these western prairies,' said General Sheridan, and he gave up trying to estimate the number."

All of those herds were wiped out in the twenty-

five years which might be termed the day of the hide hunter.

The building of railroads out across the plains speeded up the slaughter. Hunters swarmed out over the prairies. Buffalo hunting was a money-making business. An expert with rifle and six-shooter could make as much as one hundred dollars a day. Tom Nickson, of Dodge, was reputed to have killed one hundred and twenty buffalo in forty minutes. Bill Tilghman killed three thousand three hundred in a little over two years.

When I, a boy, arrived in Dodge the buffalo were pretty well thinned out, but I saw eighty thousand buffalo hides in one pile in Dodge City, and it had not taken long for them to accumulate. Car loads were shipped every day to Leavenworth, where hides sold at different times at from a dollar and a quarter to five dollars apiece. In that day every sleigh and sled in the country had one or more buffalo robes. Now, a buffalo robe is a relic of ancient days.

The influx of so many thousands of buffalo hunters exalted the six-shooter, for they had to fight as well as hunt. The Indians realized that the slaughter of the buffalo was exterminating their

food supply, and everywhere they harried the hunters, who were a bold and fearless lot.

One of the fiercest battles ever fought between whites and Indians occurred when I was a lad, living in Dodge. In all the history of Indian warfare only one other fight equaled it in the stark courage and fortitude of the handful of whites that were in it. That other was the battle of the Arickaree. The two combats were alike in many ways. In each a few white men were surrounded by hundreds of Indians; in each the siege continued for days, with hunger and burning thirst added to the suffering of wounds and the horror of those hundreds of naked savages ever circling round and round. But there was this difference: the whites in the Arickaree battle were soldiers, with a great Indian-fighting general in command, and the combat is duly chronicled in the histories of Indian wars, while the whites in the battle of Adobe Walls were buffalo hunters, and written history has almost passed it by.

"'Dobe Walls," as we called it, was a prairie camp of three small buildings made of 'dobe bricks of sun-baked earth, on the Canadian River due south from Dodge City. Nineteen buffalo hunters from Dodge City were quartered there that June, clean-

ing up one of the last of the big buffalo herds. They shot and skinned buffaloes all day and went into camp at night. There was no suspicion that Indians were near until, one morning at daylight, Billy Ogg went out for water and discovered an army of Indians on horseback charging down upon the little cluster of 'dobe buildings.

There were seven hundred Indians, all braves and veterans of many battles, and armed with rifles, six-shooters and bows and arrows. In the camp were twenty-eight white men, but nine were non-combatants, cooks and camp workers. Only the buffalo hunters, nineteen of them, were armed fighting men. They had a buffalo gun and two six-shooters apiece, and they had plenty of cartridges. Some were asleep when Billy Ogg ran in, shouting that Indians were upon them. The weather was hot and doors had stood wide open through the night. The men had no time to close them before the Indians were upon them. Two camp hands, asleep under a wagon outside, were killed and scalped in the first onrush of Indians. The nineteen buffalo hunters stood in doorways and leaned out of windows and met the charge with such a volley from buffalo guns and six-shooters that the

seven hundred Indians were beaten off. They retreated, reformed and charged again.

Through one whole hot June day that incredible siege went on; seven hundred Indians against nineteen white men, and in every minute throughout that long day the Indians charged and circled the camp, and poured lead and arrows against the earthen walls. They backed horses up against the barred doors and pushed them in. They got upon the earthen roof and dug holes through it. They rained so many bullets and arrows against the walls that in places the impact of the missiles wore holes through the bricks of sun-baked earth.

There were enough deeds of heroism in that beleagured camp that day to fill a book.

The camp ran out of water the afternoon of the siege. The pump was out in the open, one hundred feet away. Daddy Keeler, a veteran buffalo hunter, volunteered to get water.

"I'm sixty, and I ain't got much longer to live, nohow," he laughed, as he picked up the water bucket.

He walked coolly to the pump, his dog following him. The dog was killed in the first volley the Indians sent after him. Daddy hung his bucket on

the pump spout and worked the handle up and down. A bullet swept his hat off. Bullets spat all around him. He filled his bucket, picked up his hat, and the first thing he said as he regained the house was:

"I wish the dog hadn't follered me."

Bat Masterson ran from one building to another to get a fresh supply of cartridges. An Indian, hidden in a clump of weeds, arose and shot three times at him. Bat leaped upon the Indian, while bullets sang past him and cut his clothing, but he stayed long enough to send the Indian to the Happy Hunting-Ground. Then he got the cartridges and returned with them.

Bat Masterson told me that without the thirty-eight six-shooters in that battle the whites would have lost it. The most deadly fighting was done at close range, hand to hand and face to face. The windows were square openings in the earthen walls, without glass or any covering. Indians on foot charged those windows in crowds, seeking to shoot in and slaughter the defenders. Sometimes there were three or four Indians at once with their rifle barrels at the windows, with others behind them ready to step up when one fell. The whites could

not have beaten off those assaults with rifles alone, but two men at a window, with a six-shooter in each hand, and men behind to reload them as fast as they were emptied, made it impossible for an Indian to get a hand inside.

The most desperate fighting was done on the first day, but the siege went on for one whole week, and then, a buffalo hunter who had escaped and ridden to Dodge City, returned with a relief party which drove the Indians off. Four of the besieged had been killed, including the two under the wagon. The bodies of eighty Indians were strewn on the prairie around the camp. And so ended the seven-day battle of nineteen buffalo hunters against seven hundred Indians.

With the passing of the buffalo came the cattle era on the plains, and the buffalo hunter became a cowboy. Emerson Hough, in *North of '36* has told how, when the Kansas Pacific had laid its rails out into Kansas, the first herds of long-horn cattle, lineal descendants of the animals brought over by the Spaniards three and four centuries ago, were driven from the Gulf coast up across Texas and the Indian Territory to the "end of steel" at Abilene, Kansas.

When the Santa Fé built out to Dodge City that became the end of the cattle trails from Texas. By that time the herding and driving of cattle to the rail ends had become an established business and great cattle ranches sprang up in western Kansas, Indian Territory, No Man's Land and the Panhandle, where all was open range. Land and grass were free to the one bold enough and strong enough to hold it. There was no rent nor taxes to pay, but neither was there a court of record in all that stretch from Nebraska to the Staked Plains. Old Judge Colt was the final arbiter of all disputes. And wearing firearms promiscuously, the owner did not always limit their use to defending his just rights. Often all that was mean and wolfish in a man came to the surface when he was beyond restraint of law and civilized convention, and men who become accustomed to taking the law in their own hands are apt to grow arbitrary.

There were no fences. The lines of the great ranches were approximate and overlapped. The grazing herds of different owners intermingled. There were disputes and feuds over ownership, boundaries and water rights. The Indians still were in the habit of quitting their reservations for more

beef than the government ration allotted them, and there always was the temptation before the white man of a short cut to herd ownership by way of a branding iron. The first outlaw bands of the plains began as cattle rustlers. Every ranchman and trail driver armed his hands and expected them to shoot to protect his interests.

The cowboy inevitably was a reckless, lawless, unschooled youngster by force of his calling and his environment, and his was a free interpretation of the moral code. When he went to town with three to nine months' pay jingling in his pockets, he was like a sailor in from a long cruise.

In the days of which I write, Dodge City was the capital of the cattle trade and the outfitting place of a vast territory. Long trains of wagons, loaded with supplies, came and went daily. All around the town were the camps of freighters, bull-whackers, mule skinners, hunters and cowboys. I have seen seventy-five thousand cattle there at one time, awaiting shipment to the East. Money was plentiful. The smallest coin was a quarter—two bits. A cigar was two bits, a drink of whisky two bits, a newspaper two bits. I remember the first nickels and dimes that came to Dodge City. A druggist introduced them,

expecting to draw trade by pricing certain articles at five and ten cents and giving change; but no one wanted his chicken feed.

Easy money on the border brought into its towns an invasion of gamblers and sharpers of every stripe, and between them and the men of the open was a fierce enmity. The frontiersman used his revolvers not only for offense and defense but as a safety-valve, to blow off the excess steam of his hot emotions, as an expression of his pleasure as well as his anger and resentment. When excited or drunk, instead of swinging his hat aloft and hurrahing, he split the air with a salvo of shots from his artillery. When the British Blondes gave a show in Dodge City's largest dance-hall, Prairie Dog Dave, unable to restrain himself, drew both his guns and belched ten exuberant shots into the ceiling, and no one objected. I saw a cowboy puncture a piano with five vicious bullets because he could not keep step to its music. When a fresh traveling salesman from Kansas City came to our hotel and grew sarcastic over the plain food set before him by hard-working Mrs. Kelly, String-finger Jack expressed the popular disgust and won the approval of the public by shooting under the table at the stranger's feet. A cowboy who

had lost his wages in a gambling house in Dodge City expressed his displeasure by drawing his six-shooter and banging away at the check rack of the faro bank, and as the bullet splashed among the stacks of red, white and blue chips, they flew in all directions. Then he shot into the roulette wheel and perforated the "goose" of the keno game, and with his last two bullets shot out the lights and escaped in the darkness.

Six-shooters were as current on the border, in trade and gambling, as twenty dollar gold pieces. Many a time I have seen a man who had lost his money, take his six-shooter from its holster and trade it in for its value in chips. In the Bull's Head saloon and gambling house, operated in Abilene by Ben Thompson, I was watching a faro game one Sunday afternoon. The table was surrounded by a bunch of cowboys who had just got in with a herd of cattle from off the Texas trail, and were gambling their wages. As they went broke, one after another, they would pawn their six-shooters for stacks of chips and buck the game again. Thompson was issuing twenty-two dollars in chips for a Colt's, eighteen dollars and fifty cents for a Remington and sixteen dollars for other makes of six-shooters.

I saw him take in twenty-three of them. If the owners did not redeem them within a few days they would be sold.

A roving evangelist came to Dodge City to hold a protracted meeting. He opened in an empty store building. He was a good mixer and every one warmed to him except Prairie Dog Dave. The preacher planned a big meeting for Sunday night. Rowdy Kate, keeper of the biggest dance-hall, gave him the use of her place for that one occasion. Every one was invited to come, and the preacher, aiming to make a big hit by snatching Prairie Dog as a brand from the burning, went to see him personally, and wrestled with him, and pestered him until he promised to come.

Sunday night Rowdy Kate's hall was filled with men and women sitting on boards strung along over beer kegs. A pulpit had been rigged up at one end, and the preacher, an active and ambitious young man, began by asking:

"Is Prairie Dog Dave here?"

No answer.

"Boys, Prairie Dog promised he would come. Where is he? Will some of you go out as a committee and bring him in?"

Shortly the committee returned with Prairie Dog, who sat down sullenly on a faro table in the rear.

It was a good sermon, all about living rightly.

"Some day, boys, you are going to come to death's door, and then you will want to be ready to go," were the closing words, and in the midst of the solemn silence that followed, Prairie Dog arose and in a firm voice, questioned the preacher:

"Mister Sky Pilot, do you mean to say you're livin' thet away, so good thet you're ready to cash in any old time?"

"Yes, sir, I am."

"Then you better die right now, when you're settin' purty," exclaimed Prairie Dog, and he pulled his two six-shooters and banged away, aiming not to hit the preacher, of course. But as the bullets kicked splinters out of the pulpit all around him, the evangelist let out a yell and dove down and crawled in behind some kegs. Prairie Dog blew the smoke out of his guns and said:

"Boys, you see he's no more ready to die than I am."

It was said that Prairie Dog Dave's six-shooters were so filled with notches that there was not room

for more. Many uncanny legends were whispered about him. One was that somewhere he had been in a six-handed poker game with the joker "running wild." He discovered that he was being cheated and he killed the five men who were playing with him.

Another story about him was that a man accused him of stealing his horse. Dave "laid for" that man, waiting and watching to catch him alone so he could kill him without witnesses to accuse him; but that opportunity did not come, so one day Dave was riding horseback along the road and he met his accuser and three other men. They stopped to talk. Dave said:

"Do you still accuse me of stealing your horse?"

"Yes, I do, and unless you pay for it I am going to have the law on you."

Thereupon Dave killed the man, and, so there would be no accusing witnesses, he killed the other three men, too, and left the four lying in the road.

Dodge City was full of such mysterious men. When a stranger arrived it was a serious breach of etiquette to ask his name, or whence he came. If he chose to give a name, all right. If not, the town tacked a name to him, often suggested by some peculiarity of appearance or manner. Some of those men

with odd names that I recall were: Off Wheeler, Blue Pete, Shoot-'em-up-Mike, Bull-whack Joe, Bar-keep Joe, Dirty-face Charley, Fat Jack, Cock-eyed Frank, Dutch Henry, Short-creek Dave, Skinny McDonald, Doc Holliday, Ground Owl, Polecat Sam, Bone Tom, Soddy O'Brien, Dugout Slim, and there were no end of Bills—Rattlesnake Bill, Butcher-knife Bill, Hurricane Bill, Comanche Bill, Arkansaw Bill, Missouri Bill, Apache Bill, and so on.

We had in Dodge City at that time a committee for the discouragement of horse stealing, known as "The Stranglers," and Mysterious Dave was the head of it. No one ever knew any other name for Mysterious Dave, nor where he came from, nor his past history.

One day I met Mysterious Dave and he said:

"Hey, Kid, come on, we're going up-river a ways to have some fun."

I got my pony and joined the party of a half-dozen men, led by Dave. They joked and laughed as we rode along, but there was one man, a stranger, who never spoke. Arrived at a grove of willows on the bank of the Arkansas River they led this man's pony up to a tall cottonwood tree, tied his hands be-

hind his back, put a rope around his neck, tied the other end to an overhead limb, and we all rode back to town.

The man did not speak through it all. The last I saw of him his bare head was bent, his chin was on his breast and the pony was standing quietly, his head bent, too.

Within an hour or so the pony came back to town, alone. I suppose he stood there by the tree a while, and then started off; the man must have slid off his back and strangled to death at the end of the rope. I asked no questions but was told afterward that the man was a horse thief.

I have read a great many stories of lynchings in the Old West, but in all my life, spent upon the frontier, this was the only lynching I saw.

CHAPTER II

THE BORDER CODE

In those days, when I was a lad on the border, if a man killed another there was no coroner to hold an inquest and no court in which a man might be tried, but there was a court of public opinion. To kill a man who was unarmed was murder, and the fellow who did it was usually shot to death or run out of the country. It was murder to shoot a man in the back or to shoot him unawares.

In a freighters' camp at Wagon-bed Springs two men quarreled, and after they were separated, and all of us thought the fuss was over, one of them, Arizona Jack, shot and killed the other without warning. We formed what was called a jack-rabbit court, Arizona was put on trial for his life, and found guilty. He begged for his life, but the executioner, just before he pulled the trigger, rebuked him with:

"You're not as decent, even, as a rattlesnake, for it warns before it strikes."

In every killing there must be an element of self-

defense or of punishment for an unforgivable wrong, such as cheating at cards. After a justice of the peace had established a court in Hays City, a man killed another in a game of poker. The slayer was taken to the justice, who asked: "Are you guilty or not guilty of downing this man?"

"Guilty."

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"What did you kill him for?"

"He started to count the cards in the deck."

"Suspected you of cheating, hey?"

"Sure. He might just as well have come right out and accused me of cheating."

"That's so. Who saw you down this man?"

"No one. We was playing alone."

"Then go on about your business and keep your mouth shet. Prisoner is discharged for lack of evidence."

This unwritten law of the Old West, which gave to every man a chance, saved the life of Clay Allison, who was known from the Texas Panhandle to the Rockies, and from Dodge City to the Red River of the South, as a killer who was without fear, was quick on the draw and a sure shot.

Allison was also somewhat of a wag, as is illustrated by the following incident. He was stricken

with the jumping toothache while riding his ranch on the Washita. The nearest dentist was in Las Vegas, two hundred miles to the westward. Allison rode that whole distance on horseback to have his tooth pulled. The dentist pulled a tooth, but the ache continued, despite all of Allison's efforts to kill the pain with liberal doses of whisky.

So Allison went to a second dentist who said: "Why, he has pulled the wrong tooth," and the second dentist pulled the right one and thus ended the ache.

Thereupon Allison took several more drinks of whisky and returned to the office of the first dentist, grappled him, flung him to the floor, and with his foot on his chest, and a pair of forceps in his hand, he yanked out four of that dentist's front teeth. As he pulled them he slatted them, one after the other, upon the floor, but did not speak a word until the fourth was out. Then he threw the forceps to the floor and said:

"Now, you son-of-a-gun, how do you like your own medicine?"

The whole West was laughing over this exploit when Allison rode into Dodge City with the avowed purpose of shooting up and cleaning out that town.

One of Allison's favorite amusements was to ride into a town, single-handed, and with a six-shooter in each hand, shoot out windows and lights and drive every one indoors and then strut and do his stuff up and down the street, daring any one and every one to come out. Some one had told him that Dodge City was too wild a town for him to try that kind of a stunt in and get away with it.

"Wild and woolly and hard to curry, is she? Well, I'll tame Dodge City single-handed and alone," declared Allison.

Those threats having been conveyed to Bat Masterson, then sheriff and peace officer of Dodge, one might think that under the circumstances Bat would have been justified in dropping Allison on sight. When Allison rode into Dodge one morning and began as if he meant to drink up all the whisky in town, and the air grew lurid with his threats, several friends of Bat urged him to down Allison, but the sheriff said:

"No. Let him spout. Talk won't hurt anything. It will be time enough for me to move when he starts in to do something."

Dodge City, then, had only one street that amounted to anything, and the saloons and dance-

halls were bunched along it. Bat went to an upstairs room with a window that overlooked that street and he sat there for several hours with a buffalo gun trained on Allison, who was swaggering up and down the street, cursing and threatening, with every one edging off from him and giving him a wide berth.

Bat was waiting for Allison to draw one of his six-shooters and then Bat would have killed him, in defense of the town. But Allison never even made a motion as if to draw, and thus he escaped. After storming around for a while he mounted and rode away, owing his life to the rude etiquette of the border, which spared a man until he drew his guns.

The code against shooting a man in the back was so rigid it was extended even to the protection of outlaws and murderers from being snuffed out from behind, or without a chance.

At a dance one night I saved the life of Billy the Kid, not solely for the reason that I knew him well but simply that I could not see a man murdered from behind. On the night of which I speak Billy the Kid was mounting his horse in front of the dance-hall, his back to the open door, when a man,

greedy for the price on the outlaw's head, alive or dead, would have shot him in the back, but I threw his six-shooter up and exclaimed, "Don't shoot him in the back!"

The outlaw heard the commotion, turned and saw what was happening, leaped into his saddle and faded into the night. The next day a stranger came riding to our camp, inquired for me and gave me this message:

"Billy the Kid sent me to tell you he won't forget that you saved his life."

But he never had a chance to repay the favor, even if he had wished to; he was killed not long afterward.

If ever a man deserved killing it was Billy the Kid. He was a human tiger, the most pitiless killer of that period. In his short life of twenty-one years he killed twenty-one men, and the most of those killings were murders done in cold blood. He shot down two Mexicans "just to see them kick," and he killed three cowboys simply because they worked for a man he hated.

Billy the Kid was just a thin-faced boy, with long hair and two buck teeth incisors that were longer than the others, giving him a sort of wolfish look

when he grinned. I have seen only one picture of him. I have a copy of that.

Billy the Kid was the leader of a gang of outlaws and cattle rustlers in what was known as the "Lincoln County War" which raged for years between rival bands of cattlemen and in which upward of two hundred men were killed. Lincoln County was in New Mexico, then a territory. President Hayes appointed General Lew Wallace governor of the territory and told him he wanted him to put a stop to the cattle war by breaking up the gangs that were keeping it alive.

As soon as Governor Wallace arrived in New Mexico he arranged for an interview with Billy the Kid. They met by appointment at midnight in a lonely cabin, and Governor Wallace asked him to surrender, guaranteeing him protection and his freedom. But the Kid declined. He gave as his reason that he would be assassinated. The real reason was that he loved the wild life and the leadership of an outlaw gang. He was vain of his notoriety and of the terror that always spread ahead of him.

Then Governor Wallace issued a proclamation, putting a price on the head of the Kid, and the Kid retorted by sending word to the governor:

"I mean to ride into the Plaza at Santa Fé, hitch my horse in front of the Palace and put a bullet through Lew Wallace."

At that time Governor Wallace was writing his book, *Ben-Hur*. He was living in the ancient Palace of the Governors at Santa Fé, and he would sit, late into the night, at a table beside a window on the ground floor, writing beneath an oil lamp.

His wife told that after she heard of the threat of Billy the Kid she went into that room at dusk each evening and closed the blinds, "so the bright light of the student lamp might not make such a shining mark of the governor writing on *Ben-Hur*."

Pat Garrett had been made sheriff of Lincoln County with the general understanding that he would "get" Billy the Kid and his gang. Pat was a lean man, so tall that he towered shoulders-high above other men; a low-speaking, quiet man, who said little; a man of cold nerve, a good man, always, on a prairie trail. He had been a Ranger in Texas, and a cowboy and trail-driver there and in New Mexico.

Garrett and Billy the Kid had known each other for years, had camped together, drunk together, had eaten together, had danced with the same girls in

Fort Sumner, Lincoln and White Oaks, and had been friends. But when Garrett became sheriff he sent word to the Kid that his game was up, he must come in and surrender.

To the messenger who brought him that word the Kid replied:

"Tell Pat to fix things for his funeral; I'm going to drill him first time I see him."

Garrett organized a posse and went upon the trail of Billy the Kid and that trail meandered in and out and up and down over a good part of the territory of New Mexico, and all the cowboys and cattlemen, bad men and good, were on tiptoes, watching the game.

In his later years Billy the Kid had the reputation of being the best shot with a six-shooter in the whole Southwest. But, in my opinion, Pat Garrett was a better one. I asked Pat, once, what he considered a good shot with a six-shooter.

"Well," he said, "put up a bull's eye the size of a silver dollar, and if you hit it twice out of every five shots, at fifteen or twenty paces, say thirty to forty-five feet away, I would call that good shooting, far above the average."

In camp once I saw Garrett put up such a mark

Photo from Mr. Sutton's Collection

Kipling's frontier saloon and gambling house in Pecos, Texas, in 1880. The man marked with X, watching the faro dealer, is Joe Miller, said to have shot the peace officer who killed Billy the Kid. Later at Ada, Oklahoma, he was captured and hanged in a barn there by a vigilance committee

Photo from Mr. Sutton's Collection

PAT GARRET

The peace officer who killed Billy the Kid

and shoot five times at it, without sighting over the barrel, just shooting offhand, from the hip, the five shots following one another quickly, and one bullet cut the bull's eye, one hit an inch below it, another hit an inch above it and the other two hit six inches from center. That was expert shooting. Aimed at the watch-charm on a man's front, any of those bullets would have killed him.

I have hunted with Garrett and have seen him ride along on horseback and throw down his six-shooter on a rabbit at ten or fifteen yards distance and never miss. He never sighted his six-shooter and rarely raised it above his waist. He had the direction-instinct, and could point his gun, as a man points his finger at an object, without careful aiming.

In those days, when Garrett and Billy the Kid were out gunning for each other, many an argument was held, and many a bet placed, in cowboy camps, as to which would win, and as the hunt went on the interest grew. Pat and his posse surrounded the Kid and his gang in a lonely ranch house, and Pat sent in a courier, under a flag of truce, demanding that he surrender without a fight and thus save lives.

"Pat says you're cornered and can't escape, so

why not give in, quietly, and not waste life?" said the courier.

"You go and tell Pat to come on and to come a-smokin', for we're sure goin' to burn him if he gets in range," was the message returned by the Kid.

That time the Kid and his gang escaped, and the odds against Garrett were raised. Another time the Kid and his band were ambushed by Pat and his posse, two of the Kid's men were killed, and the odds swung the other way.

One morning, just before daylight, Garrett and his posse, on the trail of the Kid, rode up to an old abandoned stone house, once used by sheep herders, out upon the open prairie, at Stinking Spring. Outside the door the ponies of the outlaws were tethered. It was zero weather, and there was a foot of snow on the ground. Garrett and his men squatted behind a bank, within thirty feet of the door, and waited.

Just at daylight the door of the old stone house opened and Charlie Bowdre, one of the outlaws, stepped out with a feed bag filled with oats for his pony. Garrett snapped to his feet, drawing his six-shooter, and commanded:

"Hands up! Shove 'em up!"

The outlaw, startled at sight of Garrett, reached

for his six-shooter, and Garrett fired. The bullet hit Bowdre in the chest. He swayed back through the open door, and Garrett heard Billy the Kid say:

"Charlie, you are done for. They've got you. Go out and try to get one of them before you die," and the Kid pushed him out.

Bowdre, with death whitening his face, staggered in the snow like a drunken man, and tried to raise his six-shooter, as he stumbled toward Garrett, who saw that he was dying and would not shoot again. Garrett heard him say:

"I wish—I wish——" and he fell, face down, in the snow.

What he wished no one will ever know.

All that day the Kid and his men stayed within the stone house, and Garrett and his posse, behind the shelter of the embankment, covered the only door with their rifles and six-shooters, while the body of Charlie Bowdre lay, freezing stiff, in the snow.

Garrett and the Kid bantered each other across the snow.

"Better come out and surrender, you can't get away this time," Garrett called to the Kid, and as the day wore on the Kid began to believe it was so.

Shortly after noon the voice of the Kid was heard from the black interior of the house calling:

"Hey, Pat, what's your game if we do come out?"

"I'll protect you and see that you get justice," replied Garrett.

"Justice! I'm not looking for justice. That's one thing I don't want," said the Kid.

"I'll see that you get a fair trial."

"We ain't looking for no fair trial. You know what a trial would do for us. I like to dance, but not on air," the Kid bantered.

In the middle of the afternoon Garrett sent one of his men to a distant ranch house and got coffee and meat and bread. He kindled a fire in a little hollow and the aroma of the steaming coffee was wafted into the stone house, where the outlaws huddled, without fire or food.

"Say, Pat, don't be hoggish with that coffee. Send us in some," shouted the Kid.

"Come on out and you can have all you want," answered Garrett.

Within the stone house it was terribly cold. The outlaws had been without a bite to eat since breakfast of the day before. Their hands were becoming numb. They knew there was never a chance to es-

cape with Pat Garrett and his men camped before the door.

"We'll come out if you'll give us a fair show," shouted the Kid.

"All right, Kid. Come out one at a time and with your hands up."

The first to come through the door was Billy the Kid. It was the first time in his life he had ever put up his hands for any man.

One man in Garrett's posse had especial reasons to hate Billy the Kid, and as the outlaw came through the door this man threw his rifle to his shoulder and would have killed him, but the code of the border saved the bandit leader then. Two other members of the posse struck the barrel of his gun upward, and another pressed the muzzle of his six-shooter against his side and said:

"Drop that gun. What're you trying to pull here? You wouldn't down a man with his hands up, would you?"

Garrett wrapped the frozen body of Bowdre in a horse blanket and took it and the three outlaws to jail.

The Kid was tried for murder, convicted and sentenced to be hanged, but within a few days of the

time set for his hanging he killed two of his guards and escaped. Garrett was away at the time, in another town buying lumber for the gallows on which the Kid was to have been hanged. When he came back and learned that his prisoner was gone he went on his trail again, and found and killed him.

Many false stories have been told and printed about the killing of Billy the Kid. One account, which had wide circulation, was that Garrett killed the Kid as he lay in bed, asleep. A variation of that account was that the Kid was in a drunken sleep, and helpless, when Garrett sneaked into his room and murdered him in his bed. I had the true story of this killing from Garrett, himself, and for the sake of historical accuracy I repeat it here exactly as Garrett told it to me.

CHAPTER III

THE SHOT IN THE DARK

After his escape from the jail in Lincoln, New Mexico, Billy the Kid faded from sight. Pat Garrett, sheriff, hunted for him with posses, but Lincoln County was as big as all the New England States and a part of New York State thrown in for good measure, a great part of it was mountainous, with wilderness in which a man might hide and never be found. More than two months passed without a trace of the escaped bandit, and then a man whispered to John W. Poe, one of Garrett's deputies, that the Kid was in hiding in and around Fort Sumner. Garrett had made up his mind that the Kid had gone to old Mexico.

"He wouldn't be fool enough to hang around Fort Sumner, where every one knows him," said Garrett.

"Don't you be too sure of that," insisted Poe. "The Kid has a girl there that he is daffy over, and the place is filled with his sympathizers. They look up to him as a hero. They would shelter him. I believe the tip is worth looking into."

Poe insisted so strongly that at last Garrett decided to look into it, and he and Poe and Kip McKinney, another deputy, started for Fort Sumner.

"It was late at night when we arrived at a place in the sand-hills about five miles out from Fort Sumner, and we picketed our horses and slept on the ground there," said Garrett, in telling me about it shortly afterward. McKinney and I were both well known in Fort Sumner, but Poe was a stranger there, and so, the next morning Poe went in to spy around while McKinney and I lay in hiding in the sand-hills. Poe was to return at night and report.

"I had no idea that the Kid was within a thousand miles of Fort Sumner. I could not believe that he would stay within the very shadow of the gallows that waited to hang him, when he could just as well have gone on out of the country; but it was my business as sheriff to investigate every rumor, so McKinney and I laid in the warm sand all day and waited for Poe to return, which he did at the appointed time.

"Poe told us that when he rode into Fort Sumner he could see that the people were watching him from every side. The place had a population of only about two hundred and fifty, the majority of whom were

Mexicans. There were probably twenty Americans there, and the bulk of them were tough characters who would be on the side of the Kid. Poe hitched his horse and went into a saloon, and there a gang gathered around him and began to bombard him with questions. What was his name? Where was he from and where was he going? He gave them plausible answers and drifted around the town until afternoon, and learned nothing positively; but his presence, his moseying around, seemed to worry a lot of people, and there was an indefinite something in the air, maybe it was telepathy, that impressed Poe with a feeling that the Kid was there.

"It turned out afterward that he was there, that very forenoon, while Poe was mixing around, and that he rode out of town soon after noon, but no one really knew that Poe was on the hunt for him.

"I had given Poe a letter of introduction to a ranchman, Mr. Rudolph, who lived seven miles north of the town, and I had instructed Poe, if he could learn nothing in Fort Sumner by noon, to ride out and see Rudolph, who was a friend of mine. Poe rode out there, presented my note, and said to him:

" 'Garrett thinks the Kid is hiding in or close to Fort Sumner, and he wants you to tell me if you

have heard anything of that kind and what you know about it.'

"Rudolph became nervous and excited; he said he had heard such a rumor but did not believe it, because, in his opinion, the Kid was too wise to stay in New Mexico, where he was known by so many, and had made so many enemies who would be glad to betray him. Poe sensed something in the manner of Rudolph that convinced him he knew where the Kid was, and later developments proved that Poe was right, the ranchman did know, but, like every one else in that section, he was afraid of the Kid's six-shooters, and he was glad when Poe rode away.

"When Poe met McKinney and I in the sand-hills that night and reported those things, I was for going back to Lincoln, but Poe was so sure the Kid was hiding near by that, more to satisfy him than for any other reason, I said to him: 'All right, Poe, we've come this far, we'll go into Fort Sumner and go to the bottom of this rumor, and if the Kid is there we'll land him.'

"I knew the woman whose name was linked with that of the Kid, and I knew if the Kid was in Fort Sumner he would probably be in and out of her

house some time in the night, so we three rode quietly to a grove near the town and tied our horses in the deep shadows there. Then we crept into a peach orchard in the rear of this woman's house, where we could hide and see any one who might come or go.

"It was a beautiful night, in July, with a bright moon riding in a cloudless sky, and we lay in the shadows of a peach tree from nine to eleven thirty o'clock, but saw no one. My belief, that we were working on a cold trail and that the Kid was then far away, probably in old Mexico, had grown stronger all through the night, and as midnight approached I whispered:

" 'Boys, I'm going to drop in and have a talk with Pete Maxwell. He's a friend of mine and if the Kid is here Pete will know it and will tell me. If he says no we will hike back to Lincoln.'

"Pete Maxwell was the leading citizen of the town, the richest and most influential man there, with a good reputation. I had known him for years. We sneaked out of the orchard and by roundabout paths to Maxwell's house, and as it was within a few minutes of midnight, no one saw us.

"Maxwell lived in a big house that had been quarters for army officers when the fort was garrisoned

by soldiers. It was a long adobe house with a wide veranda or porch on each side, and separated from the street by a picket fence. This fence enclosed quite a large plot of ground and within that enclosure was an adobe house in which lived Deluvina, an Indian woman, a servant of the Maxwell household, who had been bought from the Indians when she was a girl by Pete Maxwell's father.

"I had lived in Fort Sumner, had been in the Maxwell house many times, and knew every room and niche in it. Maxwell's room was in one corner, and I knew he would be asleep at that hour. As we came up to the gate in the picket fence I told Poe and McKinney to wait for me, on the outside, while I went in to talk with Pete. McKinney squatted on the ground, outside the picket fence, his back against a post of the gate that opened upon the porch and Poe sat down on the edge of the porch, just inside the gate, and distant only the width of the porch from the door to Maxwell's room. They both sat in a deep shadow cast by the house and porch.

"I had a rifle in my hand, and before I stepped up on the porch I drew my six-shooter, the same weapon with which Wild Bill Hickok had killed so many, and which he was wearing when he was killed in

Deadwood. I did that, not because I expected to have to use it there. I was not in the least suspicious; Pete was my friend, I firmly believed that Billy the Kid was miles away, I had no reason to suspect we had been seen by a person in Fort Sumner; but, I was sheriff of a county that had been aflame for years with the most deadly cattlemen's feud this country ever knew, on every hand were desperate men, killers, outlaws, with prices on their heads, and I had been put into office to round up those killers and end that cattle war. There was never a day that some threat was not borne to me, and they were not idle threats, they came from men who, I knew, would kill me at the drop of the hat, on the slightest chance. Danger for me lurked on every hand, peered at me from every bush and rock, on every trail, and in every village I entered I knew there were men whose hands itched to pull down on me if I ever gave them the chance. But, here, in Fort Sumner, I knew were dozens of men, friends of Billy the Kid, who would kill me boldly, in the open, rather than see me take the Kid back to Lincoln to be hanged; and the Kid, himself, had told me, to my face, that he ached to get a chance to kill me.

"So, we crept stealthily and silently into the town that night of the thirteenth of July, and at Maxwell's gate my two deputies dropped silently down and melted into the shadows, and I took out my six-shooter, not because I looked for danger, but solely that it was my habit to be always prepared for it, and with it in my hand I crossed the porch, on tip-toe.

"It was a hot night and Maxwell's bedroom door was open. I stepped noiselessly in and stood my rifle up against the door-post, inside. It was dark in there, but I knew where Pete's bed was and I went over to it, sat down upon the edge of it and reached over with my left hand and gently shook Pete and awakened him and said:

" 'Pete, it's Pat Garrett; I want to talk with you about Billy the Kid.'

"At that moment both Pete and I were startled to hear Billy the Kid's voice on the porch, just outside the door, asking sharply, in Spanish: *'Quien es?'* [Who is it?]

"And now I must go back and tell more of the strange combination of happenings that brought all of us together at that midnight hour.

"Billy the Kid had been hiding out either in Fort

Sumner or close to there all through the two months since his escape from Lincoln, and he had been sleeping nearly every night in the adobe house of Maxwell's servant, Deluvina, within the Maxwell premises. Maxwell told me afterward that he was afraid to protest or to tell that the Kid was there; the town was filled with the friends of the Kid, and if Maxwell had betrayed him by so much as a word his life would have been snuffed out. Maxwell had been urging the Kid to go to old Mexico, and the Kid had agreed to go and was to start within a day or two.

"On that day, the thirteenth of July, the Kid had been out on horseback somewhere and returned, shortly before midnight, tired and hungry. He had entered the house of the servant, Deluvina, at about the time we were leaving the peach orchard. He said to the Indian woman that his feet were sore, and he pulled off his boots and said:

" 'Deluvina, I'm hungry as a wolf, cook me a steak, will you?'

"She answered that they had no meat but that Maxwell had slaughtered a beef that day and a part of the carcass was hanging in an outer room over in Maxwell's house.

" 'All right,' the Kid said, 'I'll go over there and cut a thick steak. I want to see Pete, anyhow, and you get the fire started to cook it by the time I come back.' He got the butcher knife and started for Maxwell's room, bareheaded, in his shirt-sleeves, in his stockinged feet, with the butcher knife in his hand, his belt loaded with cartridges, around his waist, and a six-shooter on each hip.

"Poe, sitting on the edge of the porch, saw the man coming along the inside of the picket fence, when he was about fifty steps away, but he had never seen Billy the Kid, and the thought never entered his mind that this was the man for whom we were hunting.

"The Kid did not see Poe until he was almost upon him and went to step up on the porch. Then he quickly shifted the knife from his right hand to his left and jerked out his six-shooter, sprang upon the porch and, leveling the gun at Poe, asked sharply: *'Quien es?'*

"Inside the room, sitting upon the edge of the bed, I recognized that voice, instantly, and I never was so startled by anything in all my life. Pete was as surprised as I. He lay perfectly still, listening. He knew, as he told me afterward, the instant that

sharply uttered *'Quien es?'* pierced the stillness of that summer midnight, that some one was going to be killed there within a minute, and it might be him, for if the Kid survived the shooting Pete would have a hard time explaining why the sheriff was in his room and two deputy sheriffs were at his door.

"My left hand was on Pete's shoulder, and I felt him tremble nervously. In a moment the Kid called sharply again: *'Quien es?'*

"I sat still, keeping my hand on Pete's shoulder, ready to kill him if he made a false move, for I realized then that Pete had been harboring the Kid. I dared not take my hand off him, nor get up and turn my back to him, for he probably had a gun handy and might shoot me in the back, or shout a warning to the Kid, so I sat still, and Pete lay still, and again, the third time, we heard that crisp: *'Quien es?'* Then I heard the voice of Poe reasoning with the Kid:

" 'Don't be alarmed, sir; nobody is going to hurt you.'

"Poe, you see, thought the Kid was some friend of Maxwell who had been frightened by coming suddenly upon two men sitting quietly in the dark, and Poe arose and advanced toward him, his two

hands extended reassuringly in front, palms up, trying to quiet the fears of this stranger with a gun in his hand.

"This all happened within the space of a few seconds. Why the Kid did not shoot Poe and McKinney, lurking there in the shadow, no one can ever know. He probably thought they were Maxwell's friends.

"Anyway, the Kid, still with his six-shooter down on Poe, came backing through the door into Maxwell's room, and there he turned and asked, rather excitedly: 'Pete, who are those two fellows on the outside?' And as he asked it I felt, for I could see only a faint outline where he was, that he was moving in his stockinged feet toward the bed. I realized, too, that in the fraction of a second more he would discover me there, I knew that already he was becoming suspicious, for Pete had not answered him, had not moved in the darkness. How could he answer? What could he say?

"I knew the Kid would never surrender, that it was his life or mine. My gun was in my hand, and as he asked: 'Who are those fellows on the outside?' I aimed, quickly and intuitively, at a deeper patch of shadow, moving in the darkness of the room,

where the voice was, and as I fired I ducked quickly, and as I dropped to the floor I fired a second shot. I thought I heard a shot fired by the Kid at me, but afterward we found that this third sound was from my own second bullet which glanced from a window frame and struck the hard wooden headboard of Pete's bed with a resounding thwack that sounded like a shot.

"At the same time I heard a gasp and a sound of a body sinking heavily to the floor, and the rattle of something heavy striking the floor with a metallic ring, and then all was still. I lay quietly for a moment, listening, my gun ready, but there was the stillness of death in there, so I got up and glided through the door and brushed against Poe, standing on the porch.

" 'That was the Kid, I believe I've got him,' I said to Poe.

" 'The Kid nothing!' exclaimed Poe. 'Pat, the Kid wouldn't come to Maxwell's house, you've got the wrong man.'

" 'That was the Kid all right, I know his voice,' I replied.

"Then Pete came rushing out and bumped into Poe in his fright, and Poe, not knowing who he was,

pulled his six-shooter and would have shot him but for my interference. Pete was terribly excited, but we made him go to his mother's room, in a far end of the house, and fetch a tallow candle.

"I was not sure I had killed the Kid. He might have been only wounded and playing possum, waiting to get a shot at me. I was taking no chances, so I placed the lighted candle on the window-sill, outside, and looked in and saw a body lying quietly on the floor. We went in then, and there lay Billy the Kid, stretched out on his back, dead, the butcher knife at his left hand and his six-shooter at his right. It was the clatter of those weapons falling to the floor that I had heard. My first bullet had gone through his body, a little above his heart.

"As we stood there, looking at him, a clock on the wall of Maxwell's room struck the hour of midnight. Not more than thirty seconds had passed from the time Poe saw him coming along the picket fence until I had shot him.

"It was told afterward that we cut his fingers off as souvenirs. That is not true, of course. The shots had aroused about every one in town and nearly the whole population came to Maxwell's house; many threats were made against us, and we kept on our

guard. We delivered the body to the women of the place, who laid it out on a carpenter's bench, with lighted candles around it, and until morning they mourned and prayed for his soul, which was all right to do, so far as I was concerned. Next morning we sent for a justice of the peace, a jury was selected and an inquest held. The verdict was that I was justified in killing the Kid. That afternoon he was buried in the old military graveyard in Fort Sumner."

The death of Billy the Kid broke up the outlaw gangs and ended the reign of the six-shooter as king in Lincoln County.

I asked Pat Garrett: "Were you nervous there, in the dark, when Billy the Kid, super-gunman and killer, came in on you?"

"No," he answered, in his quiet unemotional way. "A fellow with nerves wouldn't last long in the business I'm in."

And that was true.

CHAPTER IV

"FANNING" FROM THE HIP

On one of President Roosevelt's visits to Oklahoma I was one of his bodyguard while within the state. In Oklahoma City, Bill Tilghman was introduced to him. As they shook hands I heard the President ask him, "Are you the Bill Tilghman, United States Marshal, of whom I have been hearing and reading for twenty years or more?"

Tilghman was a modest man, and his face flushed as he answered, "I have been a field marshal for the Government for a good many years, Mr. President."

Roosevelt's teeth gleamed and he shook Tilghman's hand again.

"Marshal Bill, I'm dee-lighted," he said. "For years I have wanted to ask you a question. As a gunman on the side of the law, you have had a hundred fights with some of the deadliest experts with the six-shooter in the world, all bent on killing you. How do you account for the fact that none got you?"

"It's a mathematical proposition, Mr. President."

"How so, Marshal Bill?"

"I always managed to beat the other fellow to it by the sixteenth part of a second," was the answer.

"But how did you beat them to it? That is what I should like to know. Many of those killers you have worsted were lightning on the draw too."

"Well," the veteran marshal said, embarrassed and wishing to avoid the subject, "I can't just explain it; but there's one thing always counts in a fight of that kind—the man who knows he is right always has a shade on the man who knows he is wrong."

But that was far from all of it.

I have been asked, a great many times, how it was that those gunmen on the side of the law, in the old wild days on the border, came out unhurt from hundreds of battles with desperadoes whose lives depended upon their ability to shoot first and shoot straight.

One of the reasons they escaped lay in their method of handling a six-shooter. They did not shoot in the fashion that is pictured in the movies and described in the popular literature about the old West.

A few years ago Sam Dunn and I were killing time in Amarillo, Texas, and we went to see a mov-

ing picture. In the first scene the movie hero leaped into a saloon filled with outlaws and drew two six-shooters, aimed them, one in each hand, at the gang of bad men in front of him, and cowed them and held them at bay, while he stood there sighting along the barrels.

Sam prodded me with his elbow and growled, "Fred, look at that blamed fool. Let's go out."

"Wait, Sam, we've paid our money! Let's see what this hombre will do next," I urged.

A desperado raised cautiously up from behind a faro table and hurled a bowie knife at the hero, who thereupon began to pump lead into the company.

"Durned if I'll set and watch that stuff," said Sam, and we went.

The thing that so provoked Sam was that this outlaw tamer had pulled his guns from holsters on his hips, had raised them to the level of his eyes, with a forefinger on the trigger of each, and when he began to shoot he sighted along the barrels and pulled the triggers with each shot until six bullets had been fired from each gun.

"Je-rusalem!" Sam grumbled as we walked together up the street.

Sam Dunn had been brand inspector for the

Texas Cattle Raisers' Association for years when the Panhandle and all Oklahoma was open range, when the six-shooter was judge, jury and executioner in the settlement of all serious disputes. He knew that no western gun-fighter, either on the side of the law or against it, ever handled a six-shooter in the manner shown in the movie. In a fight with a real gunman he would shoot in that way only once; he would not live to do it again.

Some of the best gun-fighters never touched the triggers of their six-shooters. In the last fifty years I have known most of the marshals, sheriffs and bad men who earned reputations, and many of them never owned a six-shooter with a trigger that could be pulled. Some of the most expert were fanners and flashers and they used single-action guns.

The difference between a single-action and a double-action gun is this: Two separate motions must be made to shoot a single-action gun. The hammer must be pulled back with the thumb and cocked, and then the trigger must be pulled with the forefinger. To shoot a double-action gun only one motion is required. The pulling of the trigger raises the hammer, releases it and lets it fall. One may shoot the six bullets, one after the other, from a

double-action gun as quickly as he can pull the trigger six times. With a single-action gun he must cock the hammer with each shot.

A novice would choose the double-action gun, but the frontiersman discovered, early in the game, that in the desperate haste of drawing a gun and in getting the forefinger quickly and rightly placed for action upon the trigger, there was often a fumble and a miss. When a man's life hangs upon the certainty of his shot being on its way the minutest fraction of a second ahead of the other fellow's, he can not risk chances of a forefinger groping to get within the trigger guard; he must achieve the draw, the aim and the shot with the least possible expense of motions.

So the most expert gunmen I have known selected single-action six-shooters, generally of forty-five caliber, and the first thing they did with them was to put the triggers out of commission. The gunman took the gun apart and filed off the dog—that part of the mechanism by which the hammer was held cocked and was released when the trigger was pulled. When the parts were put together again, the trigger was dead, and the hammer, when pulled back by the thumb, would fall as soon as released.

At my home I have a collection of guns, rifles, six-shooters and bowie knives, each with a history of tragedy and sudden death. Among them are the six-shooters used by some of the most noted gunmen of the West, and in the majority of them the mechanism has been filed to make the trigger useless.

I have seen many a movie actor pull the hammer of a six-shooter back with the ball of the thumb, but the gun-fighter never did that. As his hand closed around the stock of his six-shooter, his thumb shut down upon the hammer—not the ball of his thumb, but the second joint—and as the gun was drawn free of belt or holster, the thumb pressed down and cocked it, another motion swung the muzzle forward, the thumb was lifted and the hammer fell.

The gun was never lifted to the level of the eyes, nor sighted, when quick action was necessary. That would have been lost motion that might mean death to the one foolishly wasting so much time. If pulled from the belt, the gun was fired from the hip. If pulled from a holster beneath the arm, it was fired from that level.

Six shots were never fired, and this for the reason that no experienced gunman ever had six loaded cartridges in his gun. There was always one

empty chamber for the hammer to rest upon, for safety.

Most of them were two-gun men; they carried two six-shooters, and the best of them could use a gun in each hand with equal dexterity. That gave a man ten cartridges to shoot if he was facing a crowd. If it was a man-to-man encounter, only one gun was drawn, and generally one cartridge was enough. If a man did not hit his mark with the first shot, the chances were he would not live to shoot the second.

An adroit gunman could raise the hammer and release it with his thumb so rapidly that the five shots would follow one another without a discernible break in the continuous b-r-r-r-r-r of the reports. That was called fanning or flashing. Many of the fastest shooters in the old days were fanners. They had to be to survive.

I saw Al Jennings, the former Oklahoma outlaw, lay an empty tomato can on its side in the road and, with a single-action filed-off six-shooter in each hand, fan bullets so fast upon it that the can went rolling and bouncing along and did not stop moving until after the tenth bullet had pierced it, and not one of the ten shots missed.

When I last heard from Jennings he was an evan-

gelist out in California, and was shooting sermons as effectively as he formerly shot lead.

I believe the most dexterous gunmen were born with a knack for hitting a mark, just as some men are born with a gift for pitching curved balls or juggling eight bottles in the air at once. I saw a woman in a circus stand up against a board and a man threw an armful of knives, and each one struck the board with a vicious "Spang!" within an inch of her flesh, until she was corralled with knives. Not one man in a thousand could ever learn to do that, even with no end of practise.

It is just so with offhand shooting. Some men could never learn to do it well. Others, through a natural aptness for it, and through years of almost constant practise, excelled at it.

I have seen Bill Tilghman, in his home, stand for an hour at a time practising the draw and the shoot with two empty six-shooters. His life depended upon his quickness in those movements and he could not afford to become stale. I knew a cattleman in No Man's Land, in Western Oklahoma, who kept in practise by standing before a full-length mirror for an hour each day, drawing and swinging his guns into position to shoot. His wife used to try to per-

suade him to stop what she called his foolishness, but one day he demonstrated the value of it when he turned a corner in town and faced a cattle rustler who had threatened to kill him on sight. Before the outlaw could even make a motion to pull a gun, my friend had planted five bullets into his body.

A gang of cowboys went on a riot in a Texas town, shot out the lights and windows, killed a few and terrorized the rest, and the citizens sent a call to Austin for the Rangers to come and quell the outbreak.

Pat Dooling was sent alone. When he got off the train the citizens were there to meet the Rangers and asked where they were.

"I'm the Ranger," said Dooling.

"Did they send only one Ranger?"

"You've got only one riot, haven't you?" asked Dooling, and he quieted it, alone, in short order.

Dooling was a famous shot with a six-shooter. Some fifteen years ago he killed an outlaw who had many friends in the Texas Panhandle, and Dooling was arrested and charged with murder. He was tried in the camp of his enemies. I went up there just to sit with him through the trial, as a comfort to him. The prosecuting attorney, not knowing him

very well, bullied him a good deal, and the old fellow got restless and his hand wandered toward his hip several times, but he controlled himself. The prosecutor tried to get him to admit that he had shot the man, but Dooling was unused to courts; he knew he was among enemies and that there was a plot to convict him, and he would admit nothing.

Finally the judge, seeing which way the wind lay, said:

"I will examine this man myself." And he asked him:

"Pat, did you kill this man?"

"I don't know, sir."

"What—you don't know whether you killed him?"

"No, sir, I do not."

"Did you shoot at him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you hit him?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Come now, Pat, I am your friend. I will see that you get fair treatment here. Did you hit him?"

"Well, sir, if there was one bullet hole in his left nipple and another about an inch below it, both made with a forty-five, I expect I hit him."

There were just those two bullet holes, exactly where Pat had said they were. He was such a dead-sure shot he knew where his two bullets ought to have hit, even though he was one hundred feet away when he fired. The jury acquitted him.

During that trial Pat and I used to sit together in the hotel lobby in the evening. I asked him if he was ever nervous or scared in the face of danger.

"Yes," he answered. "When I was scouting ahead of some railway surveyors in Western Texas, I crossed a bunch of outlaws, and they sent me word that they'd kill me on sight. That scared me, for it was a bad bunch, all man-killers, and I knowed they meant it, and I kept my eyes open for them. One day I rode into a new town and stopped to water my horse. Seeing a saloon, I lit and went in for a drink. The saloon had a long bar, with a short end bar at right angles to it. I stepped up to this short bar and asked for my drink. Just then I looked down along the long bar, and there stood that outlaw bunch, five of them, and I looking right into their faces and they looking into mine. From where I stood at the end bar, the five were all in range in a straight line ahead of me, and by good luck I got my six-shooter out a leetle ahead of any of them."

He ended his narrative there.

I waited a while and asked, "Well, Pat, what happened?"

"Fred, it was just like stringin' fish." And that was all he said.

CHAPTER V

"FILL YOUR HAND!"

Wild Bill Hickok unquestionably was the fastest and surest man with a six-shooter that the West ever knew. This was undisputed in his own time, which was the golden age of the six-shooter, when every army post and camp and cow town had its expert gunmen. He learned the use of firearms when he was a boy on a farm in Illinois. He could beat any one in his neighborhood at shooting when he was twelve years old. While yet a boy he came to the western border, landing from a steamboat at Kansas City. He wandered out upon the plains and became a pony express rider with Buffalo Bill, an overland stage driver on the Santa Fé Trail, buffalo hunter, government scout and Indian fighter, a Union spy and sharpshooter in the border warfare during the Civil War and a peace officer on the border when it was at its wildest and woolliest.

His principal trade in all those years was the taming of outlaws and drunken gun-fighters, and he worked hard at the job. His six-shooters were his tools, and he practised with them as assiduously as a

concert pianist; using them as a lion tamer uses his whip and pistol—to frighten and overawe if possible, to kill when in doubt.

I first saw Wild Bill when I was a boy. My father, a contractor who had helped build the Santa Fé railroad across Kansas, took me with him to the sutler's store at Fort Leavenworth, and there I saw General George A. Custer and his two scouts, Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill, buying goods. They were young men then, and dressed in fringed buckskins that fitted them beautifully. I never saw three such strikingly handsome men together before or since. They were tall, finely proportioned men. Each had hair that fell like a cataract around his shoulders, and each obviously was proud of it.

Most of the plainsmen of that period wore their hair long. Easterners, who knew no better, thought it was an affectation, but there were good motives for it. When a man was out on the plains or in the mountains he was beyond reach of barbers or shears, his hair grew long, there was warmth and comfort in it in winter, he got to like it that way, and long hair became the style on the frontier. Another reason was that the Indians believed a man who cut his hair short was a coward. It was hard to lift a short-

haired scalp, and the Indians thought that was why the paleface cut it—to save his scalp. But a white man with long hair was held to be a bold warrior, and it gave him prestige.

Wild Bill was not wild. He was a cool soft-spoken man of few words. And his name was not William; it was James.

Wild Bill Hickok was a close friend of Bat Masterson, and that made Hickok my friend, too. At that time Wild Bill was the most celebrated gunman in the one thousand mile stretch between Ogallala and Laredo. In every barroom and gambling house, cow camp and camp-fire, men who lived by the six-shooter talked of his surpassing skill, his nerve and the notches on his gun. Even then the stories told of him were becoming legendary. I never asked him for the true versions. He was touchy on the subject; but after Wild Bill was killed at Deadwood, Bat Masterson, who had every reason to know, told me that he had counted up eighty-seven men, Indians not included, that Hickok had killed.

Silent Hank, an old plainsman, buffalo hunter, overland stage driver, trapper and hunter, whose hair fell in white snowdrifts about his shoulders,

who dressed in fringed buckskins and wore around his neck a red-flowered handkerchief with the flowing ends tucked through a huge bear's claw in front, who knew Wild Bill intimately for years, said to me:

"I can put my finger on forty-eight men, not countin' Injuns, that Wild Bill has snuffed out, an' all in the line of his duty under the law."

But he did not kill all of them in the line of his duty, as Silent Hank supposed.

Wild Bill was a good deal of a dandy. I have seen him in a Prince Albert coat, checkered trousers, a silk waist-coat embroidered with colored flowers, and over his shoulders a cape with flowered-silk lining. He took as much pride in his boots as in his wealth of blond hair. They were made to his order in Leavenworth and I have known him to pay as high as sixty dollars for a pair. The tops were of black patent leather embroidered in various devices in curves and spirals, and the heels were two inches high.

That sort of dress, combined with his natural good looks and agreeable manner, attracted the notice of women. All through his life he was entangled in one love-affair after another. Bat Masterson

told me that he knew of eight men killed by Wild Bill because of jealousy about women, and in each one of those affrays the quarrel was brought on, not by Wild Bill, but by the other man who was insanely jealous of Wild Bill's superior attractiveness. "Few women could resist him," was the way Bat put it.

Colonel E. C. Little, of Kansas, was a boy in Abilene when Wild Bill was marshal there and years afterward Little wrote this:

"On horseback Wild Bill was the handsomest and most graceful man ever seen west of the Mississippi, and he was hardly less so on foot. He stood six feet one inch in height; he was not heavily built but was still very powerful, of the lithe and sinewy order. I once stood before the Apollo Belvidere and said to my companion that Wild Bill might have served as a model for the ancient statue. Straight as an arrow, easy, graceful and nonchalant, he was an ideal specimen of physical manhood."

General Custer, in his book, *Life on the Plains,* declared that Wild Bill was one of the finest specimens of physical manhood he had ever seen. Henry M. Stanley, who afterward became world famous by discovering David Livingstone in Darkest Africa,

was a newspaper correspondent with General Hancock's expedition against the plains Indians. He wrote of Wild Bill, who was a scout under General Hancock:

"He is as handsome a specimen of manhood as could be found. He holds himself straight, has broad compact shoulders, is large chested, with small waist and well formed, muscular limbs, a fine handsome face, free from blemish, a light mustache, a thin pointed nose, bluish-gray eyes, with a calm look, a magnificent forehead, hair parted from the center of the forehead and hanging down behind the ears in wavy silken curls."

Colonel George Ward Nichols, of the United States Army, met Wild Bill and wrote of him: "I thought John Wilkes Booth the handsomest man I had ever known, but Wild Bill was handsomer in face and form than I thought it possible for a mere man to be. I thought as I looked at him of eagles, hawks, stallions, and John Wilkes Booth, but he had a finer, saner, better balanced, more magnetic face and head than Booth."

As I have said, Wild Bill was a quiet-mannered man, of cool judgment, few words and peaceable disposition, who never sought a quarrel and who never killed unless he believed it was necessary.

Many of the men he shot down were noted from the Rio Grande to the Red River of the North as killers. Wild Bill, of course, in his activities as peace officer, made hosts of enemies, and numerous plots were laid to assassinate him. When he was marshal of Hays City I was walking up the plank sidewalk there, and I saw Bill coming down the middle of the street, walking slowly, a sawed-off shotgun in the crook of his left elbow.

He came over to shake hands and I asked him, "Why the middle of the street, Mr. Hickok? Isn't the sidewalk good enough for you?"

He explained that a short time before, it had been necessary for him to kill, in self-defense, a couple of drunken cowboys who were shooting up the town and resisting arrest. They were popular hands on a ranch in the short-grass country and their friends had raised a purse of two thousand dollars as a reward for any one who would kill him. So he was avoiding the sidewalks, where doorways and the openings between buildings might give cover to some aspirant for the reward.

There was always some one with an ambition to strut in the cattle camps, saloons and dance-halls as the bad man who had killed Wild Bill, and, of

Dodge City, Kansas, in 1878

Photo from Mr. Sutton's Collection

WILD BILL HICKOK

course, Bill was simply forced to destroy those fellows when they came against him.

I saw the body of a desperado from the Brazos country of Texas who was reputed to be phenomenally quick with his guns, who rode horseback all the way to Hays City to kill Wild Bill. At every place he stopped along the route he bragged that he would be back that way within a few weeks with Wild Bill's scalp.

Wild Bill heard all about it, but as usual said nothing. He was used to threats of that kind. He kept on his usual way, quietly patrolling the streets, twisting the ends of his long mustache, until one day he and that bad man from Texas met in the street and Bill had him covered before he could move a finger.

"Fill your hand!" Bill remarked.

Although the man from Texas had two six-shooters in his belt, and Bill knew he had come especially to kill him, he would not shoot him until he had a chance to draw. That was a matter of ethics with the old border marshals and sheriffs. They would give the other fellow a chance, even when it was exceedingly dangerous to do so. Texas drew; but before he could shoot, Bill killed him, and in-

stead of going back to Texas in triumph he went to Boot Hill.

A drunken soldier rode his horse into a saloon in Hays City one day and tried to make it mount a pool table. Wild Bill interfered, the soldier reached for his gun and Bill killed him. The following day a troop of the Seventh Cavalry, stationed at Fort Hays, turned out to slay Bill. Seven of them set upon him. He killed three and fled. He came over ninety miles across the prairie, to visit with Bat Masterson.

I heard him telling the story to Bat, and Bat, who was a good deal of a wag, inquired, "What did you run for, Bill?"

"Huh! I couldn't fight the whole Seventh Cavalry," he replied.

So far as I know, that was the only time he ran away from a fight, yet he survived them all. A writer of moving picture titles might say "He led a charmed life."

I knew of three different desperadoes who claimed they had cowed Wild Bill and forced him to "back water." I have looked into those stories and I do not believe them. In my opinion Wild Bill never quailed before any man. I have never known

nor heard of another man who had the chilled-steel nerve that Wild Bill had.

When he took the job of marshal of Abilene, Kansas, it was the wildest and wickedest town in the world. It had twenty saloons and gambling houses in one block, and many dance-halls and dives, and they were operated by desperadoes and outlaws, mainly, and frequented by the roughest and most reckless class of men this country ever had.

A man counted two thousand five hundred cowboys, mule skinners, bull-whackers, tough soldiers, gamblers and desperadoes in its saloons on one Sunday night.

The town lived upon the trade in cattle that came up the trails from Texas to be shipped east by rail from there. The town became so dangerous and wild that cattle buyers and shippers threatened to abandon it, and to avoid this the leading men had the town incorporated, so a marshal could be appointed to keep order.

But no one would take the job. The board built a calaboose of stone and before the roof was on the cowboys tore it down. Placards were posted on all roads ordering cowboys to disarm before entering

the town, but the cowboys shot the posters so full of holes they were unreadable.

Successive marshals tried the job and resigned. The town board implored the chief of police of St. Louis to send two of his bravest men to keep order in Abilene. He selected two who had been walking beats in Kerry Patch and they arrived in Abilene with guarantees that they would tame it. They stayed only half a day and returned to St. Louis.

The board hired Tom Smith, known everywhere on the border as the leader of the Bear River riot, in Wyoming, in which he, alone, faced and cowed a whole mob. Smith lasted in Abilene only a few months and was shot down and buried in Boot Hill.

Then came Wild Bill, with his brace of six-shooters and his ice-cold nerve behind them. His first order was that no one could carry a gun within the town limits. He had to kill a few brash gunmen to convince the others that he meant to enforce that order. He walked into the biggest dance-hall one night, mounted a chair, and with a six-shooter in each hand, said:

"Every man here walk over to that bar and stack your six-shooters down on it," and every man obeyed. The bar was piled high with six-shooters.

"You can't tote a gun in this town and live," said Wild Bill.

The gamblers hung up a big purse for any one who would remove him. The cowboys sent for Wes Hardin, Texas desperado, who, in his lifetime of twenty-five years, had killed thirty-four men. Hardin arrived in Abilene. Years afterward, while in the Texas penitentiary, Hardin wrote the story of his life and gave the following account of his encounter with Wild Bill in Abilene.

"I started up the street and some one behind me shouted out:

" 'Set 'em up; all down but nine.'

"Wild Bill whirled around and met me. He said:

" 'What are you howling about, and what are you doing with those pistols on?'

"I said, 'I am just taking in the town.'

"He pulled his pistol and said: 'Take those pistols off; I arrest you.'

"I said all right and pulled them out of the scabbards, but while he was reaching for them I spun them around on my fingers hooked in the trigger guards, giving them the double roll, which reversed them so that, instead of the butts being presented to him, the muzzles were staring him in the

face. He wasn't acquainted with the double roll and he sprang back. I told him to put his pistol up, which he did. I cursed him for a long-haired scoundrel that would shoot a boy with his back to him (as I had been told he intended to do me) and he said:

"'Little Arkansaw, you have been wrongly informed.'"

Hardin then goes on to tell how he made Wild Bill "walk," and how Wild Bill was so afraid of him he allowed him to stay in Abilene and carry his guns. This story of Hardin's has become history throughout the West, but, in my opinion, it bears within itself the proof of its own falsity.

In the first place, Wild Bill would never have permitted Hardin to "roll" his six-shooters. Peace officers on the frontier, and especially Wild Bill, did not disarm desperadoes bent on murder in that way. The custom in disarming a gunman was first to get the drop on him and hold it, never relaxing vigilance for one instant, and then command him to unbuckle his belt, in front, and let it and its six-shooters fall to the ground. The next step was to force the desperado to step away from his artillery, and when far enough away the officer could pick it up and march his prisoner off. I have seen

hundreds disarmed in that way, by the unfastening of the belt.

I never, in my life, saw or knew a peace officer to say to a desperado: "Hand me your guns."

He might just as well say: "Go ahead and take a shot at me."

Wild Bill knew Hardin's reputation as a killer. Every one on the border knew it. He knew Hardin had come to Abilene breathing threats against him. Wild Bill had in his pocket then, a proclamation issued by the governor of Texas, offering a reward for the capture of Hardin, who was wanted for murder.

Wild Bill never drew a gun except to do business with it, and if Hardin's hands strayed in the direction of his guns, after Wild Bill threw down on him, Bill would have killed him, instantly, and without the slightest compunction, as he had killed many a one before.

I have talked with men who were in Abilene when Hardin was there and they all agreed that Hardin's story was false. The facts, as they related them to me, were that Wild Bill did not molest Hardin, although he knew Hardin had been brought to Abilene to kill him, but he went quietly about his

business, never seeking Hardin nor inquiring about him.

That, I know, was Wild Bill's way. He would take considerable satisfaction in ignoring this bad man from Texas, and would give him all the rope he wanted, and permit him to brag and bluster, until his confidence grew that Wild Bill was afraid of him. Then he would get bold and commit some overt act, and at the proper psychological moment, Wild Bill would step in, and when the killer went to draw, Bill would add one more to his list of men who had foolishly tried to beat him to the draw. Persons who had every opportunity to know the facts, assured me that Hardin did make a lot of threats, but the opportunity did not come for him to kill Wild Bill, and as Wild Bill seemed to be keeping out of his way, he actually thought Bill was afraid of him, so one night he went on a wild spree and shot a man and then undressed and went to bed in the hotel.

When Wild Bill heard of it he hired a hack and drove to the hotel. In some way Hardin was apprised of his coming, he looked out the window, saw Bill get out of the hack and enter the hotel, and Hardin took window and all with him as he leaped

through. He alighted on top of the hack, in his under clothing, stole a horse that was hitched near by, and in that undressed state headed for Texas and never returned.

Then Phil Coe, another Texas killer, undertook the job of removing Wild Bill. In the street one night he shot at a dog. Wild Bill heard the shot and came out of a restaurant, faced Coe and asked:

"Who is doing that shooting?"

"I am," said Coe, and drew his six-shooter, but Wild Bill was too quick for him. As Wild Bill's bullet hit, a puff of dust flew from Coe's clothing, below the waist line.

"I shot too low," remarked Wild Bill.

Just then another man came running up out of the darkness; Wild Bill supposed it was a friend of Coe, coming to help him, and he shot and killed that man, but it was Mike McWilliams, one of Wild Bill's deputies and best friends, killed by mistake.

The next day, when Coe's friends applied for permission to remove his body to Texas for burial the mayor gave this written permit:

"The law has been well executed on Phil Coe. I have heard what the faithful Wild Bill says about the killing. His body may be removed."

Many fanciful stories have been written about the phenomenal marksmanship of Wild Bill: that at thirty paces he could draw a six-shooter and, without sighting, would drive the cork into a bottle, the bullet going through the bottom of the bottle without smashing it; that he could and would throw a dime into the air and pierce it with a bullet; that he would ride past a telegraph pole at full speed and plant ten shots from his six-shooters within a space as large as a silver dollar; that he would shoot at fence and telegraph wires and hit them every shot.

I have had men tell me they saw him do these things.

For example, Tom Speers, once chief of police in Kansas City, was a friend of Hickok. Speers told me that he and Bill were sitting on a bench in front of the old police station on Market Square.

"Are you as good a shot as they say you are?" the chief asked Bill.

Across the street was a saloon kept by Billy Mensing, a whimsical character who had this legend painted large on the outer walls:

Billy Mensing says: If Drinking Hurts Your Business, Quit Your Business.

It was a two-story frame building, and up under

the eaves was a wide board with a knot hole in it. Wild Bill drew his six-shooters, one in each hand, and said, "See that knot hole? I'll stitch a button-hole around it." And he fanned ten shots, the ten leads making a circle around the hole.

I believe those stories were largely exaggerations. Wild Bill was a phenomenal shot and he was fond of giving exhibitions of his marksmanship, and it was only natural that a man, amazed at Wild Bill's skill, should, in telling of it afterward, add a little to it, and that in frequent retellings of it he should come to believe it, himself. Wild Bill was probably the best marksman with a six-shooter that ever lived, but he could not do the impossible. After all, it was not necessary for a gunman to be able to pierce with a bullet so small an object as a dime, moving swiftly through the air, or a wire swinging in the wind. The gunman's target was always a man's body, and that presents a pretty large surface to shoot at. Wild Bill, and all other gunmen on the side of law and order, depended as much upon their cool judgment and strategy in a crisis as they did upon marksmanship.

When I was a cowboy on the Triangle-Bar Ranch, near Dodge City, a desperado from Texas

went on a rampage in Hays City and was shooting out windows right and left and yelling like a Comanche, when Wild Bill came around a corner and met him. The desperado knew Wild Bill and hated him because of a past arrest, and now, with a gun in each hand, he had the crawl on Bill.

"I hold the winning hand this time!" he shouted.

"That's so. I can't beat that pair," replied Bill.

"No, not by a jugful you can't, and here's where I shoot you as full of holes as a tin pepperbox and hang you up to dry."

Bill made a motion with his eyes as if looking beyond the fellow's shoulder at some one behind him, raised his left hand and said coaxingly, "Don't cut him, boys! He's only in fun."

The desperado turned his head slightly to see who was about to attack him from the rear, and that was his last look, for quick as a flash Bill drew and shot him dead.

"He talked his chance away," remarked Bill as he blew the smoke out of his gun.

I knew of another happening almost like that, in Oklahoma City. Oscar G. Lee was chief of police. He turned the corner of Broadway and California Avenue, and came face to face with a fellow named

Kelly, who had threatened to kill him. Kelly drew his six-shooter and said:

"Now, old buttermilk, I'm going to kill you."

Lee looked beyond Kelly's shoulder and said: "Harley, don't shoot him in the back."

Kelly knew that Harley was Lee's brother. He turned his head and Lee landed a mighty punch on the point of his jaw. Kelly fell and Lee kicked the gun out of his hand and marched him off to jail.

Hickok's hands were small and shapely, his fingers long and tapering, like a woman's, and with all the dexterity of a sleight-of-hand performer; he had a deadly sureness of eye and judgment of distance, a skill that came from long use of firearms under frontier conditions, and to these was added a coolness that never failed him under any conditions. This combination of gifts, natural and acquired, made him the super-gunman that he was.

I have no doubt that many a desperado, cool when facing the common run of killers, felt his heart sink and his hand shake when he looked into the face of Wild Bill behind the muzzle of his gun.

Ben Thompson, a gunman-gambler who had killed many men and had held mobs at bay with his six-shooters, told me that Wild Bill was the only

man he ever feared. Thompson had a saloon and gambling house in Abilene and was cheating cowboys in a brace faro game in a back room. Wild Bill forced him to put the table out in the open saloon where it could be watched. Thereafter Thompson thirsted for the gore of Wild Bill. He tried to hire men to assassinate him. Wild Bill knew this, and one day meeting Thompson in the street, he stopped before him and stood looking into his face.

"He had two hells in his eyes," said Thompson to me months afterward.

That hell in Wild Bill s eyes haunted Thompson. He knew it meant death and he packed up and departed from Abilene.

Wild Bill was not content to rest on his natural gifts and the perfection of practise. He had invented a holster clip of spring steel which he kept secret from all but his nearest friends. I was present in Bat Masterson's room in Dodge once when he showed Bat how it worked. They talked long of their methods, while I watched with the wide eyes of youth.

He made us both promise not to reveal the secret of his trick holsters, which he carried beneath his coat, one under each arm, held there by straps over

his shoulders. The front edge of the holster was open and the gun was held in place within it by a steel clip, elastic as a watch spring, which gripped the barrel securely and yet so lightly that the least pull would fetch it free. Bill stood with his hands down, his coat unbuttoned and no weapon in sight.

"Suppose you are reaching for your guns, Bat, and I sight you at it"—and Bill gave an illustration of how he would act.

His two hands moved so quickly my eyes could scarcely follow them. His left hand caught the front of his coat at the bottom edge of the lapel and jerked it outward. At the same instant his right hand darted in under his left arm, his hand closed over the stock of the six-shooter hanging there, his thumb shut down on the hammer, and he yanked the gun out. He did not pull it up out of the holster, but jerked it out sidewise from the open spring that held it, and its muzzle swung forward.

There were just those two motions of his right hand—a swift throwing of the hand in and a throwing of it out again. His thumb automatically raised the hammer as it moved out, and the instant the muzzle pointed frontward the thumb would let go and the ball would speed to its mark. He never took

aim. Some sixth sense told him the exact instant the muzzle was in line with the mark. Bat shook his head in amazement at the swiftness of Bill's motions.

"It beats anything I ever saw," he said. "That explains why you are so lucky in downing every one you go up against."

"There isn't any luck about it," Bill remarked. "I just simply outshade the other fellow on the draw and shoot. I figured that if we both started at exactly the same time to reach for our guns, and he had to draw from the ordinary holster at his belt, while I could grab mine sidewise out of a steel spring under my arm, I could shade him on the shoot maybe the hundredth part of a second, and that much time is as good as a whole minute."

Wild Bill came to his end in Deadwood. He was sitting at a card table in a saloon, with his back to the door, a thing he never in his life had done before, when a tin-horn gambler, ambitious to strut as the killer of Wild Bill, sneaked in behind him and shot him in the back of the head.

The prowess of Wild Bill had been the theme of thousands of story-tellers around frontier camp-fires and in frontier saloons. For fifteen years he had

lived all through the Old West as a sort of border knight who did marvelous things with his six-shooters, and so it was not strange that out of his tragic taking off should have come another story of his phenomenal readiness and dexterity with his six-shooters. The occurrence seems incredible, and I do not even suggest that it really happened, but I had the account of it direct from Bat Masterson, one of Wild Bill's best friends, who went to Deadwood at once after the shooting, and the story was told and believed everywhere throughout the West.

The story was that Wild Bill's instinctive and almost marvelous quickness on the draw was shown in his last wink of life, after the forty-five caliber bullet had crashed into his skull.

The bullet passed clear through the head of Wild Bill, came out between his jaws, and buried itself in the arm of a man sitting on the opposite side of the table. Bill had no warning of it. The gambler had entered silently. When the bullet struck, Bill's hands were empty upon the table, and the instant he was hit he fell forward dead, and yet when they raised him his two six-shooters were clutched in his hands. In that split second of life left to him while the bullet was plowing through his head, he had

drawn both guns, as intuitively as he drew his last gasp of breath.

The gun that was in Wild Bill's right hand then is in my collection of firearms. He had carried it only two years before his death, but there are fourteen notches cut by him in its stock. This six-shooter was given to Pat Garrett by Wild Bill's sister, wife of a farmer in northern Kansas. Pat carried it for several years and with it killed Billy the Kid.

In 1902 the office of internal revenue collector in El Paso was vacant. There were many applicants for the place, among them the friends of Pat Garrett, who petitioned President Roosevelt to appoint him. Garrett and Roosevelt were personal friends. Roosevelt wired Garrett to come to Washington. Garrett went, and when he presented himself at the White House Roosevelt handed him a slip of paper on which was written:

"I promise not to taste liquor of any kind while I am collector of internal revenue at El Paso."

Roosevelt handed Garrett a pen, and he signed that pledge.

"All right, Pat," said Roosevelt. "You go back home and in due time I will send your commission."

"But why did you bring me all the way to Washington to tell me that?" asked Garrett.

"There has been strong opposition to your appointment," answered Roosevelt. "The most serious complaints against you were that you could not read or write and that you drank too much. When you read and signed that pledge you disproved the first two and disposed of the third. That is why I brought you here."

Shortly after this I received the following letter from Garrett:

"Las Cruces, N. M., Jan. 12, 1902.
"Fred Sutton, Oklahoma City, Okla.
"Dear Fred:

"I have something to write you that will be of interest. I have just returned from Washington, where I received a commission from our old friend, President Roosevelt, as collector of internal revenue at El Paso, and I hope I prove the right hombre for the place. Anyway, I will do my best.

"This morning I met our old friend, Billie Tilghman, and we had a good visit. I am sending you, by him, the Wild Bill six-gun you have wanted so long, the Colt's forty-five, No. 139345, with the dog filed off, and engraved 'Wild Bill' on the handle. This is the gun I put your friend, Billie the Kid, out of business with at the Pete Maxwell ranch on July 14, 1882. Wild Bill had this gun on when

Jack McCall killed him, and it was sent to me a short time later by his sister, Mrs. Lydia M. Barnes, of Oberlin, Kansas. I hope I am now done carrying guns for I feel I have served my time at that.

"When you go to your ranch in Arizona stop and see me at my new job in El Paso. Please don't part with this gun and drop me a line upon receipt of it. I am,

"Truly Your Friend,
"Pat F. Garrett."

In 1908 Garrett, the most famous of all frontier sheriffs, who, with his six-shooters, had done so much to tame the wild men of New Mexico, himself fell a victim to that weapon. I have heard different stories of how he was killed. One was that Wayne Brazel, a tenant on a ranch owned by Garrett, quarreled with him about the tenacy, and Brazel drew a six-shooter and fired twice. Garrett fell, face down, in the road, and died there, with his boots on. Another story had it that a desperado, named Miller, helped to kill Garrett in revenge for the killing of Billy the Kid. Miller and three other men were afterward hanged together from the rafters of a barn in Ada, Oklahoma, by a vigilance committee.

CHAPTER VI

"SHOOT FIRST AND NEVER MISS"

BILL TILGHMAN was the most gentlemanly, quiet mannered, fair and loyal man I have ever known. He neither swore, used tobacco nor drank. I heard him say that in his seventy years he had declined a million drinks. Virtually every one on the border drank and it was remarkable that Tilghman did not. I think that was one reason why he lived through so many gun fights.

Tilghman was scout, plainsman, buffalo hunter, Indian fighter, sheriff, United States marshal, when "there was no Sunday west of Kansas City and no God west of Fort Smith." For fifty-one years he was a gunman on the side of the law, the bull's-eye in hundreds of gun fights, and yet in all those years and in all those battles he was wounded only once, until three years ago, when he was killed by a man he was trying to arrest.

Even Bat Masterson, born and reared on the border in its wildest days, with more experience than the average man of that time and place in rough-and-ready gun fighting, marveled that Tilghman

was not shot down sooner than he was. After Bat became a newspaper man he wrote of Tilghman:

"His life has been spent on the firing line along civilization's lurid edge, and after being shot at hundreds of different times by the most desperate outlaws in the land, men whose unerring aim seldom failed to bring down victory, Tilghman comes through it all. He is the only frontiersman who has been constantly on the job for a generation and still lives."

Tilghman and I were boys together in Atchison, Kansas. I boarded for a time at the home of his father, Squire Tilghman. Bill was older than I and went to Dodge several years ahead of me. When I arrived there he took me under his wing at once and introduced me to Masterson, Luke Short, Wyatt Earp, Chalk Beeson, Robert M. Wright, and others, who were trying to keep some semblance of order in that rough town.

One night soon after my arrival I went into Rowdy Kate's dance-hall. One of the women came up to me and put her arms around my neck, and I was considerably embarrassed. Rowdy Kate saw it and she jerked the woman away with such force that she fell sprawling on the floor.

"Don't you ever speak to a boy in this place unless he speaks to you first," Kate warned her.

The woman had a champion in one of the worst and most cowardly desperadoes in Dodge City. He had murdered two men—shot them in the back. That night, as I was going to my lodging, I met him. He was drunk. He drew a six-shooter, put its muzzle against my stomach and profanely told me that he was going to kill me. I was unarmed and I was scared, but I knew my only hope was in making a bluff.

"You daren't shoot me!" I sneered. "You shoot men in the back!"

He went on his way, swearing that he would shoot me the next time he saw me, and I sat down on the sidewalk and shook.

I related the circumstance to Tilghman the next morning, and he said, "You have never packed a gun, have you? Well, you will have to get one and carry it. Every one must go armed here."

Then he hunted up the desperado and inquired, "What have you got against Fred Sutton?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing, Bill. I was just kidding him a little, that's all."

"Well, you pack up your duds and kid yourself

out of this town before night, and don't come back," Tilghman warned him, and the fellow disappeared.

So I bought a man-size six-shooter and strapped it on. Later, when the Kansas county-seat wars broke out, I received a letter which read:

"We are looking for twenty-five quiet gunmen to help us in our county-seat fight. I am told you are a graduate of Bat Masterson's six-shooter school up in Dodge City, and we would like to have your services for a few weeks, wages twenty-five dollars a day and found."

I did not answer it. I have never had yearnings to be a gunman, and I lay no claim to that title; but Bill Tilghman and Bat Masterson both taught me how to handle a six-shooter so as to protect myself, and they were good teachers.

I asked Bat once how he managed to escape from so many gun fights.

"It can't be explained," he said. "There's luck in it and good head work and a lot of other things. The main thing is always to shoot first and never miss."

Bat gave me good instructions in how to use a six-shooter.

"Never try to run a bluff with a six-gun," he said. "Many a man has been buried with his boots on be-

cause he foolishly tried to scare some one by reaching for his hardware. Always remember that a six-shooter is made to kill the other fellow with and for no other reason on earth. So always have your gun loaded and ready, and never reach for it unless you are in dead earnest and intend to kill the other fellow.

"A lot of inexperienced fellows try to aim a six-shooter by sighting along the barrel, and they try to shoot the other man in the head. Never do that. If you have to stop a man with a gun, grab the stock of your six-shooter with a death grip that won't let it wabble, and try to hit him just where his belt buckle would be. That's the broadest target from head to heel.

"If you point at something, you don't raise your finger to a level of the eye and sight along it; you simply point, by instinct, and your finger will always point straight. So you must learn to point the barrel of your six-shooter by instinct. If you haven't that direction-instinct born in you, you will never become an expert with the six-gun."

I was often with Bat on the prairie, and he would show me how to aim and shoot. He would fire with the hand in any position, seldom higher than his hip

or belt. I saw him kill many a rabbit by simply pointing, without sighting, the six-shooter no higher than his hip.

In those early days, when I first knew him, Bat Masterson was a good deal of a dandy. His spurs were gold-mounted, and wrapped twice around his waist, its fringed ends hanging to his knees, was a crimson sash of Mexican work. He wore a red silk neckerchief. His gray sombrero was banded by a rattlesnake skin of gold and silver, with glass eyes. His revolvers were silver-plated and ivory-handled, and belt and holster were studded with silver. Later he discarded these gaudy trappings, but he patronized a good tailor.

An easterner who had heard of Bat's contributions to Boot Hill Cemetery and had seen the western gunman pictured as an unshaved ruffian in flannel shirt, and baggy trousers tucked into high boots, stopped off at Dodge once and asked Chalk Beeson where he could see the famous Bat.

"When you meet the best-dressed and best-looking man in town, that will be Bat," Beeson advised him.

Nearly all those peace officers of the old frontier were likable men, but there was nothing maudlin or

irresolute about them. They knew that death was the only penalty that would curb those wild men of the border, and when it was necessary to inflict it they did not hesitate.

I have seen the statement that Wild Bill, Masterson and others suffered from remorse. I don't believe that is true. When they had to shoot a man, they did it deliberately as a man brings down a sheep-killing dog. They might regret that their business had in it such unpleasant work, but I have never known that type to be remorseful. Bat had killed aplenty. I have his best six-shooter in my collection, and it is pretty well covered with notches; but I am sure he never shed a tear over any of them; and yet he was inclined to be emotional and had a warm spot in his heart toward those he loved and liked.

Bob Wright, first mayor of Dodge City, said of Bat: "He was a most loyal man to his friends. If any one did him a favor he never forgot it."

One night in Tascosa, a cow town in the Texas Panhandle, Bat got into a row with a gang of drunken Texas cowpunchers, and one of them shattered his knee with a bullet from a six-shooter. Bat fell and the crowd closed in around him to kill him.

Ben Thompson, the desperado I have mentioned in a previous chapter, was operating a game in the saloon. He had run a game, previously, in Dodge City, and knew Bat. When Bat fell, Thompson sprang across his faro layout, drawing his six-shooter, and landed amid the cowboys clamoring for the life of Masterson.

"Back! Stand back—back to the wall—drop them guns and stick up your hands," he commanded, and every man obeyed.

"This is my friend," said Thompson calmly, pointing to Bat. "I'll down any man who touches him."

Thompson cared for Bat until he was cured and then saw him safely on his way to Dodge City.

A year afterward Thompson came to Dodge and appealed to Bat for help on behalf of his brother, Billy. Ben and Billy Thompson had gambled and fought and cannonaded a trail through almost every town on the border from Canada to the Gulf, and it was reputed that between them they had killed twenty-seven men. Billy was quarrelsome when drunk, and as he was nearly always drunk, he was often in trouble. In Austin, Texas, he had killed a soldier and Ben went to his rescue, killed a man to

help him escape and was himself arrested and served two years in prison for the crime.

Another time Ben and Billy were operating a game in Ellsworth, Kansas; there was a quarrel over the bets, and Billy shot and killed Sheriff Whitney. The whole town turned out to mob the Thompsons, but Ben held the mob off while he put Billy on a horse and sent him galloping away. Then he stood at bay, in the street, cool as an iceberg, holding a street full of people back and forcing three officers to lay down their six-shooters, waiting there, one man against a hundred, until his friend, the mayor, came, and Ben surrendered to him.

Now Billy was again in trouble, up in Ogallala, Nebraska. In a quarrel over a poker game he had shot a man and had been wounded himself, and the people had him under guard in the hotel and were waiting for him to get well so that they could lynch him.

"Bat, I can't go into Ogallala," said Ben. "I used to run a game there and every one knows me. If I showed up there they would know I had come to rescue Billy and they'd lynch him, right off, so as to make sure. I want you to go up there and bring Billy out."

"Billy isn't worth saving, but I'll do it for you, Ben," said Bat.

In Ogallala he was unknown. He put up at the hotel in which Billy was a prisoner, with a guard, day and night, at his door. Bat strolled around, pretending to be looking for a place in which to start a business. Quietly he hunted out a few friends of Ben Thompson and planned with them that at midnight, just before the east-bound train arrived, they were to shoot up a dance-hall across the street from the hotel.

Then Bat made friends with Billy's guard, plied him with whisky until he became drunk and fell asleep, and when, in due time, the shooting began, Bat rolled Billy up in a blanket, hoisted him to his shoulder, carried him out and down to the depot and into the train, and they rode together to North Platte. There they went to the home of Buffalo Bill Cody and stayed until Billy was able to travel. Cody then lent them a horse and buggy and by easy stages they drove across the prairie to Dodge City.

Later Ben Thompson announced that he had decided to "go straight." He was elected marshal of Austin, Texas, and was a good one. While he was marshal a dude from the East, wearing a high silk

hat, was walking down the street when a cowboy from San Saba County drew his six-shooter and drilled a bullet through the hat and sent it spinning. Thompson, hearing of it, borrowed a silk hat, hunted out the man from San Saba, struck a pose before him and invited him:

"Here, you're so good at shooting people's hats, shoot this one."

The fellow drew his gun and dodged behind a post and tried to shoot at Ben from there, but, for some reason, could not get his gun to work. All that Ben could see of him was a little of one side of his face and the whole of one of his ears.

"I'll mark you, anyhow," said Ben, and he fired, putting a bullet hole through the man's ear as round and neat as if it had been punched out with a machine.

Thompson called his favorite six-shooter his "life preserver," and he was a dead shot with it. In San Antonio he quarreled with Jack Harris, keeper of a combination saloon, gambling house and low variety theater, and Harris lay in wait for him with a sawed-off double-barreled shotgun charged with buck shot. As Ben went to enter the saloon he applied one eye to a narrow slit in a Venetian blind in

the doorway and saw Harris waiting for him to enter. Harris was crippled in his left hand, and he was crouching, facing the door, with the barrels of the gun resting across the wrist of his crippled hand, the fingers of the right on the trigger. Thompson hailed him with:

"Jack Harris, what are you doing with that gun?"

"To get you," came the reply.

Ben jerked out his "life preserver," his thumb flicked the hammer three times, so rapidly that the three reports sounded as one, and Harris went down. Afterward it was seen that Thompson's first bullet had entered fairly into the center of Harris' forehead, and a friend asked Thompson:

"Why did you fire three shots when the first one killed him?"

"The first shot was to make him fall; and the second was a precaution in case the first did not finish him,—it was to catch him as he fell. The third was to scare the gang in the saloon," Thompson answered.

A few months later Thompson was enticed into the same saloon and theater in which he had killed Harris, and friends of Harris filled him full of

lead, literally. There were four bullets in his head and five in other parts of his body.

While Bat was sheriff, his younger brother, Ed, was appointed marshal of Dodge City. Bat made vigorous protest.

"Ed is too talkative and soft-hearted," he said. "Instead of shooting a man who deserves to be killed, and having it over with, Ed will want to powwow with him about it, and save him, and some ornery skunk will shoot his light out before he has been in office a year."

Sure enough, it was not long until a Texas killer from off the Jones and Plummer cattle trail started to shoot up a dance-hall. Ed tried to quiet him by argument. The stranger shot Ed in the shoulder and Ed stopped him with a bullet. Just then Bat, drawn by the shooting, came into the hall, and when he learned what had happened he was wroth.

"Why did you enter into conversation with this outlaw?" he demanded.

"Well," said Ed, "he looked like a decent sort of a fellow, and I thought if I'd explain to him that he couldn't pull that rough stuff here he might quiet down and go out peacefully."

"Explain nothing!" Bat retorted. "What's the

use of picking up a snake to see if he has rattles on his tail? That fellow had a gun in his hand with three shots left in it."

Not long after that a couple of cowboys, Wagner and Walker, came in over the long trail, and Wagner roped the fiddler in the Bird Cage dance-hall and dragged him into the street. Ed tried to arrest him and Wagner pulled a six-shooter. Instead of shooting Wagner, as he should have done, Ed tried to take his gun away. While they were struggling over it Walker came out and drew his gun to kill Ed. Just then Bat came in sight around a corner. He saw what was happening and fired. Walker, shot through the heart, sprang a foot or so into the air, with upthrown arms, his revolver dropped to the sidewalk and he fell across it. Bat did not dare to fire at Wagner; he and Ed were too close against each other, struggling for the six-shooter. Bat started on a run toward them, but before he reached them, Wagner, with a desperate wrench, got the muzzle of the weapon against Ed's side, pulled the trigger and Ed fell. Wagner would have run, but a shot from Bat's gun dropped him.

Attracted by the sound of shots, I had come up in time to see the last of the tragedy. I sat down upon

the edge of the board walk and took Ed's head upon my knees. Bat sat down beside me and I said, "Bat, Ed's gone."

He put his face down into his two hands, this man who had killed twenty or thirty men up to that time, and his shoulders heaved with sobs, and tears dropped from between his fingers. Luke Short, a gambler who had killed at least a dozen men, sat down with us, and he wept too. He and the Masterson boys had grown up together.

I put my arm around Bat's shoulders to try to comfort him, and said, "Bat, you mustn't take it that way; brace up." But he did not look up or take his hands from before his face.

He said between his sobs, "What will mother say?"

Ed, the slain town marshal, did not want for courage or skill with the six-shooter, but he did lack other qualities necessary to survive for long as a peace officer on the frontier.

Bat Masterson, as peace officer at Dodge City when it was the most lawless and disorderly town in America, added thirty-seven to the graves on Boot Hill, and the bulk of those men he killed were noted gunmen who tried to shoot him first, and yet he

lived unhurt through it all and breathed his last peacefully at a desk in New York City. The last line he ever wrote, found upon his desk, was:

"There are many in this old world of ours who hold that things break about even for all of us. I have observed, for example, that we all get about the same amount of ice. The rich get it in the summer time and the poor get it in the winter time."

CHAPTER VII

SIX-SHOOTERS AND CURSES

In the spring of 1882 I went from southwest Kansas to visit my father and mother, who had moved from Atchison to St. Joseph, Missouri. They lived at Thirteenth and Penn Streets. One of our neighbors was a Mr. Howard, with whom I became acquainted. He was a tall, erect, well-built, heavy-set man with black hair, a full beard of a sun-browned color, high cheek-bones, a broad face, thick lips and a nose that was inclined to be bulbous. He was always neatly dressed, in dark clothes. Sometimes he wore an overcoat and at other times he had on a black Prince Albert coat that reached almost to his knees. He always wore a black slouch hat, a white linen shirt with starched bosom and cuffs, after the style of that day, a white collar and black string tie.

I met him, maybe a dozen times, in the pool-hall of the World's Hotel, near our home. I used to go in there occasionally in the afternoons, to loaf, and there I met Howard. I never saw him play pool. He sat, as I did, and watched others play, and he al-

ways sat in the same place, in a corner, with his back to the wall. I have forgotten how I first got into conversation with him, but after he learned that I was from Dodge City, and that I knew Bat Masterson, Wyatt Earp, Luke Short, Charlie Bassett and other gunmen, noted in that day, he plied me with questions about them; how they carried their weapons, how they drew and shot, and so on. He was especially interested in what I told him about the way in which Wild Bill used to carry his six-shooters, in a holster clip under his arm, and of the way those gunmen of the plains used to file off the dog of their six-shooters and fan the hammer.

I must say that I did not notice anything peculiar about this Mr. Howard. If he had a fierce gleam in his eyes I did not see it. If his mouth was cruel, I did not notice it. To me, and, I suppose, to the others there, he was just an ordinary man who came into the pool room to pass the time away. I recall that he said he was a railroad man out of a job. If he was armed I did not know it. Anyway, his coat would have hidden his guns if he carried any.

He would sit all the afternoon in the pool-hall, until time for school to be out at four o'clock; then he would go home, and I often saw him on the street

BAT MASTERSON

When he was peace officer in Dodge City he made history. It was the wildest and wooliest town of the Wild West

Photo from Mr. Macdonald's Collection

FRANK JAMES

The Missouri outlaw, taken at the climax of his

Photo by courtesy of T. T. Crittenden, Jr.

JESSE W. JAMES

The Scourge of the Border, taken in 1864

with two or three children hanging to his coat, and one on each arm.

One Tuesday morning, early in April, there was an unusual commotion in our neighborhood. People were running past our house and calling to each other in excitement. I rushed out and met a friend, Jim Finlay, a city detective. He was running too.

I asked him: "What's up?"

"Jesse James has been killed," he answered.

"Where?"

"Right here, close by. Come on," he puffed as he ran.

Bareheaded, I went with him. The trail led to the home of our neighbor, Mr. Howard. It was a white frame house, one and one-half stories high, with a paling fence and some fruit trees around it. It stood off to one side, by itself, on the summit of a low knoll. This gave it an elevation above all the surrounding houses. A person on the lookout in its yard might see any one approaching from any direction.

When I reached it a crowd was already gathering there, and a policeman was keeping the people back. I went in with my friend, the detective. In the front room, on his back upon the floor, lay my

acquaintance of the pool-hall, Mr. Howard. He was in his shirt-sleeves. His face was ghastly in contrast with the dark color of his hair and beard. A little globular spot of black blood was on the floor beside his ear. A bed was in a corner and on its white coverlid lay a broad leather belt, studded wth brass cartridges, and two holsters with brass-handled six-shooters, their barrels fully a foot long.

But I was chiefly drawn to the widow of the dead man, who was huddled in a heap upon her knees beside him and was hugging close to her a little boy and girl. They were crying and digging their tiny fists into their eyes. The sorrow and helplessness and fear of that mother, with her two fatherless children, was one of the most pathetic things I had ever seen.

The door was open and the house was filled with excited men who had tramped soggy mud over the floors and were milling around in a kind of frenzy, not yet settled down from the amazement into which they had been thrown by the statement of Bob Ford, the assassin, that the man on the floor was the "scourge of the border," Jesse James.

A half dozen men were volleying the widow with questions, trying to force her to own up to it.

"No. No," she wailed. "He is not Jesse James. He is my husband, Tom Howard."

Once the little boy cried: "It is not Jesse James. It is pa."

A newspaper reporter was there with a pencil and pad of paper and when she saw it she plead with him: "Please do not put this in the paper." For a long time she stuck to her denials, true to him in death, as she had been all through the years since she rode away with him, a bride. Then, when she heard how the Fords had surrendered and had telegraphed to the authorities: "We got our man," and when she saw the officers ransacking her house and gathering up trinkets, and preparing to remove the body, she saw that further denials were useless and she knelt to the police and cried:

"I'll tell you if you'll promise me to protect us from their dragging his body over the country for a show."

They promised, and she admitted that it was Jesse James. And then she cursed the Ford boys who had killed him. Kneeling on the floor by the body of her husband, her two children crouching beside her and hiding their faces in her apron, she reached her clenched fists upward and cried:

"Who will protect us now? Who will care for our children? The scoundrels, the traitors! They murdered him for money. May the curse of Christ be on them both."

Bob Ford had shot him with a six-shooter that Jesse James had given him only two weeks before. Later I went to the jail and saw the brothers, Bob and Charlie Ford, two weazel-eyed degenerates with pimpled faces and bad teeth who chewed tobacco vigorously as they swaggered in their cells. I listened while Bob Ford told a newspaper reporter the story of how he shot Jesse James, and later I heard him tell it again at the coroner's inquest.

Jesse and his wife and the two children had been living quietly in St. Joseph for months. Jesse was running short of money and had planned another robbery. The Ford boys had been in several robberies with him, and Jesse brought them to his house to help him in this one. They were to start that night. But the Ford boys had no intention of engaging in that robbery. There was a reward of ten thousand dollars on the head of Jesse James, and they had planned to kill him and claim that money. Bob told about it, as follows:

"Me and Charlie had been layin' for him for a

couple of weeks, waitin' to ketch him with his guns off, for we knowed no man could get him with his guns on. Any man that tried that would be committin' suicide. Only last Sunday I was readin' the paper to Jess, an' account of how the officers was closin' in on him an' he laughed and said:

" 'They may get me some time, prob'ly will, but I'll stir 'em up a couple of more times or so before they do,' and he told me he wouldn't surrender to a thousand men. He said he was such a sure shot that if three men sprung out in front of him and all shot him at once, he could draw a gun in each hand and kill all three of 'em before he fell. He could do it, too.

"After breakfast this mornin' Jess and me and Charlie went into the front room to talk about a bank we was goin' to stick up over in Platte City. Mrs. James was in the kitchen. Jess throwed his belt and guns on the bed and got up on a chair to dust and straighten a picture on the wall. He stood with his back to us. We know'd our chanc't had come, and we fetched him. It was the first time he had ever put off his guns, awake or asleep for fifteen year, and us layin' for him to do that very thing. Ain't that queer? Looks like we was playin' in luck

to-day. When do you suppose they'll pay us the reward?"

But Bob and Charlie Ford never received the reward they expected. Officers of the law in Kansas City who had arranged with them to kill the bandit claimed and received the bulk of it, and the Ford brothers got only a few hundred dollars.

At the inquest in St. Joseph the mother of Jesse James, Mrs. Zerelda Samuels, came to testify and identify the body of the slain outlaw as that of her son. One of her hands had been torn off by an exploding bomb thrown through a window of her home by detectives who thought Jesse and Frank James were in there. As she sat in the witness chair, at the inquest, she raised her only arm toward heaven, glared into the faces of Bob and Charlie Ford with a look of hate that must have chilled their hearts and put a curse upon them.

"You white-livered, cowardly traitors, may the God of the widow and the fatherless curse you and kill you as you killed my boy," she cried.

I shivered, and the goose flesh arose along my back as I heard that mother's curse. I had heard two mothers, both widows, curse them, and I would not have had those curses upon my head for all the

money in the world, and I am not superstitious, either.

Those were not the only curses put upon Bob and Charlie Ford. Through the Civil War Jesse James had been a guerrilla under that king of guerrillas, Quantrell, of whom John N. Edwards, his friend, wrote:

"Quantrell might be likened unto a blond Apollo of the prairies. His eyes were very blue, soft and winning. Peculiar they were in this, that they never were in rest. Looking at the face, one might say there is the face of a student. It was calm, serene, going oftener to pallor than to laughter. It may be that he liked to hear the birds sing, for hours and hours he would linger in the woods alone. His hands were small and perfectly molded. Who could tell in looking at them that they were the most deadly hands with a six-shooter in all the border? . . . If there is a race born without fear Quantrell belonged to it. In his warlife, which was one long, long, merciless crusade, he exhibited all the qualities of cunning, skill, nerve, daring, physical endurance, remorseless cruelty, abounding humor, insatiable revenge, and a courage that was sometimes cautious to excess and sometimes desperate to temerity. In the midst of a band that knew no law but the six-shooter, his slightest wish was anticipated and obeyed. Recognizing no flag but the black flag, he sat as quietly down in the midst of a hostile country as the foes who were on his track; and having

shaken hands with death, he thought no more of the word surrender.

"It is useless to declare that these kind of characters do not attract. All Paris came to see Cartouche hung, and yet Cartouche was only a robber. But then his little child was suspended on the same scaffold. In the arsenal at Jefferson City, Missouri's capital, is a picture of Bill Anderson, Quantrell's lieutenant, taken after death. The clear-cut face is ghastly pale. A white, mute, appealing look is on the tense drawn features. Dead leaves and sand are in the long yellow hair and tawny beard. For hours women gather about this picture and babble of balls and revels and dances and battles, and ever and ever come back to the white set face and the wan mute features. No visitor goes away without seeing it, and thinking of it for many a day thereafter."

Quantrell and his band of rough riders were the terror of the border, and they fought almost altogether with six-shooters. They were dead shots and the best riders in the world, and five hundred of them kept four thousand Federal cavalry busy for three years, besides five thousand infantry guarding towns and supplies. Quantrell and his men raided Lawrence, Kansas, and with six-shooters slew one hundred and forty-two men upon its streets and within its homes. Jesse James was in that raid. At Centralia Bill Anderson, Jesse James and other Quantrell men, took eighty Federal soldiers off a

train, stood them in a row and with six-shooters went along the line and killed every one. There was a strong comradeship, a bond of blood stronger than the ties of kinship, between those men who had ridden and starved and slaughtered and dared dangers together and lived by the six-shooter for three years under Quantrell's black flag, and when Jesse James was slain they united in putting one mighty curse upon the heads of his slayers.

John N. Edwards, then editor of the *Sedalia Democrat,* voiced it in an editorial in which he said:

"No one among all the hired cowards, hard on the hunt for blood-money, dared face this wonderful outlaw, one even against twenty, until he had disarmed himself and turned his back to his assassins, the first and only time in a career which has passed from the realms of an almost fabulous romance into that of history.

"We called him outlaw, and he was, but Fate made him so. When the war came he was just turned fifteen. The border was all aflame with steel, and fire, and ambuscade, and slaughter. He flung himself into the Quantrell band, which had a black flag for a banner and devils for riders. What he did he did, and it was fearful. But it was war.

"When the war closed Jesse James had no home. Proscribed, hunted, shot, driven away from among his people, a price put upon his head—what else could the man do, with such a nature, except what

he did do? He had to live. It was his country. The graves of his kindred were there. He refused to be banished from his birthright, and when he was hunted he turned savagely around and hunted his hunters. Would to God he were alive to-day to make a righteous butchery of a few more of them. . . . If his assassins had either manhood, conscience or courage they would go, as another Judas, and hang themselves. But so sure as God reigns, there never was a dollar of blood-money obtained yet which did not bring with it perdition. Sooner or later there comes a day of vengeance. . . . The end is not yet. . . . Therefore let Jesse James' comrades—and he has a few remaining worth all the Fords that could be packed together between St. Louis and St. Joe—do unto them as they did unto him."

Some time after Jesse James was killed I visited his mother on her farm near Kearney, Missouri, and she showed me his grave under a great coffee bean tree in a corner of the dooryard. On the white marble monument was this inscription:

In Loving Remembrance of My Beloved Son
Jesse W. James.
Died April 3, 1882.
Aged 24 Years, 6 Months, 28 Days.
Murdered By a Traitor and Coward Whose
Name Is Not Worthy to Appear Here.

"That means Bob Ford," said Mrs. Samuels, pointing at the inscription. "Soon after the murder of Jesse I and young Jesse were walking up North Main Street in Kansas City. He was nine years old then. All at once he said to me:

" 'Oh, grandma, here comes the man that killed my papa.'

"I looked up and saw Charlie Ford coming down the street toward me. As soon as I saw him my knees trembled under me and I became so weak I had to sit down on a box in front of a shoe store. Charlie saw me, but he went to walk past me with his head down. I said:

" 'You don't know me, Charlie?'

" 'Yes,' he said, 'I know you. You are Mrs. Samuels.'

" 'You killed my brave boy. You murdered him for money. I ought to kill you,' I said.

"He put up both hands and said:

" 'Mrs. Samuels, don't say that. If you only knew what I am suffering you wouldn't talk to me that way.'

" 'And what have you made me and mine suffer?' I asked him.

" 'Mrs. Samuels,' he said, 'I have been in the

blackest hell of remorse ever since it was done. But I didn't kill Jess. It was Bob did it.'

" 'Yes, and you knew Bob intended to do it when you brought him to my house a few days before it was done. You ate bread under my roof with blackest murder in your heart, and murder for money only. Jesse had befriended both of you, had fed you when you were hungry and had fought for you and saved your lives, and then you betrayed him. Oh, Charlie, there will come a day of reckoning for you.'

" 'There can't come a worse reckoning than I am suffering now, ever since you cursed me at the inquest.'

"He repeated over and over that he was suffering the worst agonies of remorse and he looked like it. The sweat was pouring down his face, the cords of his neck stood out and he wiped with his fingers the tears from his eyes. He begged me to forgive him and when I saw what he was suffering all the hatred of him went out of my heart and I said:

" 'Charlie, I am a Christian mother and if God can forgive you I must try to. You say you are suffering a hell of remorse, but I am afraid you will find a worse hell at the end.'

" 'I'm tempted to try that hell; it can't be worse than the one I am in,' he said. 'But if you'll forgive me I'll be satisfied.'

" 'I do forgive you, as well as my heart will let me,' I told him.

"When we parted and he walked off down the street little Jess looked up into my face and said earnestly:

" 'Grandma, I won't never forgive him. If ever I live to be a man I'm going to kill him.'

" 'You'll never live long enough, my son; God will never let an ornery man like him live that long,' I told him.

"Just eleven months after that day Charlie Ford crawled into a weed patch and sent a bullet through his own heart from the very same six-shooter he had when he and Bob killed my Jesse."

Bob Ford drifted out to the new mining camp of Creede, Colorado, and opened a saloon and gambling place. One day Red Kelley entered the place with a double-barreled shotgun loaded with buckshot and called to Ford:

"Hey, Bob!"

Ford turned quickly and Kelley fired both barrels. One of the charges of buckshot struck Ford

in the throat and blew his collar button clear through his neck. It was picked up from the floor by "Soapy" Smith, a gambler, who carried it as a "luck piece," but it brought him no luck, for he was shot and killed in Alaska soon afterward, and Bob Ford's collar button was buried with him.

Kelley was arrested for the killing of Ford but was discharged. He drifted about the West and landed in Oklahoma City, where I was living then. He was without money and spent his nights loafing in the railroad depot. The railway agent called for a policeman to take him away and Joe Burnette was sent.

He arrested Kelly and started with him for the police station, not knowing who he was nor that he was armed. On the way, while crossing a street, Kelley drew his six-shooter. Burnette drew his and they fought a hand-to-hand duel that was a classic in grisliness. Each grasped the right wrist of the other with his left hand, and for thirty minutes they wrestled, each trying to save himself and to kill his opponent.

In the struggle Kelley twisted the muzzle of his six-shooter until he thought it was aiming at Burnette and he pulled the trigger, but the bullet went

wild. Then Burnette forced his six-shooter into a position where he thought he had Kelley covered, and he fired and missed. So, panting, grunting, cursing, exerting every ounce of strength in the struggle for life, each fired three shots. Hearing those shots a crowd gathered and watched the duel, but no one dared interfere.

Finally the two became so exhausted that their legs bent under them, they wabbled and staggered and sank to the pavement. Burnette was on his back and Kelley was on top, and they still clung to each other's wrists and wrestled with each hand, trying with the left hand to force the other's right hand, and its six-shooter, out of range, and struggling to bend his right hand so as to get a bead on the other.

Kelley's strength began to ooze out of him after he fell, and Burnette felt Kelley's grasp upon his own right wrist weaken. Burnette made one desperate effort, bent his right hand inward, pulled the trigger, and the man above him wilted and sank down. Burnette was so exhausted that he lay for a minute or two, unable to speak or move, with the dead body of Kelley lying upon him. Then he called weakly to the crowd:

"Take him off; he's dead."

Burnette's ear was bitten off, and his clothing was soaked in blood. The citizens rewarded him by giving him a pair of new pearl-handled six-shooters and a new overcoat and uniform to replace those spoiled by the blood of Red Kelley, the slayer of the man who slew his friend, Jesse James.

CHAPTER VIII

OLD TASCOSA

In the days when there were no fences on the Plains, and grass was free, when cattle ranged over all the Texas Panhandle, New Mexico, Colorado and western Kansas, cowboys on a carousal used to mount the bar in old Tascosa and sing:

"Lions on the mountains; I've drove them to their lairs;
Wild cats are my playmates, and I've wrestled grizzly bears;
Centipedes can't mar my tough old hide;
Rattlesnakes have bit me and crawled right off and died.
"I'm as wild as the horse that roams the range;
Moss grows on my teeth and wild blood's in my veins;
I'm wild and woolly and full of fleas, never curried below the knees;
I'm a wild wolf, and this is my night to howl."

And they howled aplenty, for old Tascosa, while it lasted, was the wildest cow town of them all.

Tascosa had its beginnings when the first herds of longhorn cattle came up over the trails from south-

ern Texas, heading for the rail ends up in Kansas. After a long, long ride over the hot dry plains the herds came to the crossing place on the Canadian River, that meandered from west to east over the Texas Panhandle. On the north bank of the river at that point was a grove of cottonwoods, and there the weary cowpunchers and their herds would stop to rest before the long drive ahead.

Some enterprising fellow put up a 'dobe shack there, amid the cottonwoods, and stocked it with liquors and groceries; gradually other saloons and stores came in, and with them came women and gamblers and desperadoes, and Tascosa became a typical prairie cow town of the Southwest frontier, with a hundred or so permanent inhabitants, its squat buildings made of sun-baked adobe bricks, and its one main street simply a double row of saloons, gambling houses, dance-halls and stores.

Stretching away on all sides of it was the unfenced open prairie, with a few widely separated ranch houses here and there. To the westward the nearest town was Springer, New Mexico. The first town to the eastward was Mobeetie, and the nearest town north of Tascosa was Dodge City, two hundred miles away. There were no railways anywhere

near, in those days, and all supplies had to be hauled in from Dodge City.

In Tascosa I first met Pat Garrett, then at the head of a company of Texas Rangers. There I met Billy the Kid, and saved his life, in the manner I have already described. With Billy the Kid in Tascosa were Charlie Bowdre and Tom O'Phalliard, all three of them afterward killed by Pat Garrett, and several others. They were making a friendly visit, loafing about the saloons and dance-halls and gambling, and no one molested them, although every one knew they had just been on a horse-stealing expedition; but that was over in New Mexico, and Texas officers were not concerned about it.

Billy the Kid, whose right name was William Bonney, and his gang of seven or eight bandits, were heavily armed, and every day they would ride out and visit some cow camp or ranch and eat with the cowboys. They spent a day or two on Captain Torey's ranch. Torey had been a bucko mate and ship captain in the famous Black Ball line of packets between New York and Liverpool, and he was supposed to be a pretty tough citizen, himself. When he heard that Billy the Kid and his merry men were on his ranch he said to his foreman:

"Don't give that bunch of robbers and cutthroats another bite to eat. Run them off my ranch."

His foreman replied: "Captain, that's the toughest bunch west of the Mississippi; if you've any message like that for 'em you deliver it yourself."

"They don't make 'em too tough for me; I'll tell 'em," the captain retorted.

Billy the Kid heard of this and he went hunting for Captain Torey and found him in front of Ryan's saloon.

"Did you tell your foreman that we were not to have any more chuck on your ranch?" he asked.

"I did," the captain answered. Thereupon the Kid drew a six-shooter and jammed its muzzle against the old captain's stomach.

"If you want to say a prayer first, get it out of your system now, and do it pronto," said Billy.

"Say, Kid, I was only in fun. You can eat as often and as much as you want on my ranch. Go out and stay as long as you like," the captain hastened to say, and Billy put up his gun.

I came over the trail with a cattle drive and was resting in Tascosa when there was a cowboy battle in which four men were killed outright and two were wounded almost to death. I never learned

what was the cause of this shooting. Some said it started in a quarrel over Rocking Chair Emma, a dance-hall queen. Another version was that it grew out of ill feeling between two sets of cowboys, and others said it just "started" with no other cause except a combination of whisky and six-shooters, which fomented so many killings in those days.

At any rate, I recall the facts distinctly and I can see now, as plainly as if it was last night, instead of forty years ago, the pallid faces of the four dead men laid out in a row in the moonlight. The shooting began at midnight, when Len Woodruff, formerly a cowboy on the L. X. ranch, and Charlie Emory stepped out of Martin Dunn's saloon into the street and came face to face with two cowboys of the L. S. ranch—Ed King and John Lang. All four of those men, as was the custom in those days, were heavily weighted down with cartridge belts and two six-shooters apiece, and each man pulled a six-gun in each hand and began shooting. There were eight six-shooters spouting flame and lead all at once.

When the smoke drifted off on the night wind King was face-down on the ground, dead; Woodruff was hunched down on his knees, a bullet

through his groin, and Emory, bleeding from several bullet wounds, had staggered against the adobe wall of the saloon and was gasping for breath. Five of the eight six-shooters had slipped to the ground.

John Lang, the only one of the four not drilled by a bullet, ran into Jim East's saloon, yelling: "Len Woodruff and his crowd have killed Ed King." Frank Valley and Fred Chilton, cowpunchers and friends of King, were playing poker there. They leaped from their chairs, drew their six-shooters and ran out.

In the meantime Woodruff had dragged himself along the ground, into his bedroom, in a small adobe building behind Dunn's saloon; and Emory had crawled into a blacksmith's shop across the street. Valley and Chilton ran down and across the street toward Woodruff's room, and as they ran, Jesse Sheets, keeper of a little eating place, had run out to see what all the shooting was about. Valley and Chilton, guns in hand, mistook him for Louie Bozeman, a friend of Woodruff, and Valley, without pausing but shooting from the hip as he ran, fired at him. The bullet struck Sheets fair in the center of the forehead and he fell dead.

"I got Bozeman," shouted Valley to Chilton.

"All right, now let's clean up on Woodruff," answered Chilton.

Woodruff knew that King's friends would be after him, and in his sleeping room he had dragged his bed up and made a barricade of it, against his door. He had his two six-shooters, a forty-five-seventy Winchester rifle and plenty of cartridges, and with this artillery across his knees he sat in a chair, facing the door and awaiting the onslaught. Valley and Chilton tried Woodruff's door, could not burst it in, and so stepped back and fired ten six-shooter bullets through its soft cottonwood boards.

Sitting in his chair in the darkness, with bullets whizzing past him, Woodruff realized that if he stayed there he would surely be killed, so he pulled the bed aside, flung the door open suddenly, and limped out, with a six-shooter in each hand and opened fire, right into the faces of Valley and Chilton. Valley fell dead. Chilton backed up, shooting as he went, but Woodruff dropped him, too.

No one saw this phase of the battle; it occurred at midnight, and those who were awake were in the saloons, gaming joints and dance-halls, and so Woodruff escaped unseen. He knew the friends of

the men he had killed would soon seek revenge, and, using his rifle as a crutch, he limped and crept and crawled and dragged himself out beyond the town, forded the waters of a little creek, and so on he went, for three hours, dragging his body a distance of a mile and a half to a ranch house. The next day I with others went over his trail, part of the way through thick and tall weeds and grass, and all the way the trail was marked with blood.

Tascosa did not sleep the balance of that night. The little frontier town was used to shootings. An ordinary gunplay or killing would not have aroused interest enough to stop the scraping of the fiddles in the dance-halls, the clinking of glasses or the rattle of roulette wheels, but this was a super-tragedy of the six-shooter, a fight of one man against four, four men dead and two men near death.

So the women came from the dance-halls, and men from the saloons and games, and stood around those four stark forms lying, faces up, on the buffalo grass of Woodruff's yard, and until morning the crowd milled around and talked, and wondered what had become of Woodruff, and uttered threats, for nearly every man there was a partisan of one

side or the other, and every one expected the battle to begin anew.

The next day cowboys who had heard of the battle came riding in from ranches near and far. Before night five hundred men were there, milling about the street, every man of them wearing a couple of six-shooters. That day Woodruff was found at the ranch house and was arrested by Sheriff Jim East, the same East who had been in the posse of Sheriff Pat Garrett a few years before when Billy the Kid was captured in the stone house at Stinking Spring. Woodruff was too badly wounded to be molested by friends of the slain men, and, anyway, he had put up such a fight against four gunmen that he had become somewhat of a hero. He recovered from his wounds and later was tried and acquitted.

That same day the Catfish Kid and Louie Bozeman were arrested, but were released later when it was learned they had no hand in the killings. Both the Catfish Kid and Bozeman were killers. King, one of the men slain in this battle, had bombarded his way with a six-shooter to a reputation as a desperate gunman throughout the whole Texas Panhandle and beyond.

Sam Dunn, whose name I have mentioned before,

told me that King was the only man who, in all his long years on the frontier, had scared him with a gun play.

"It was while I was a cowpuncher on the old Frying Pan ranch near Tascosa," said Sam. "I was sitting in a poker game in Captain Jinks' saloon and got up and went over for a drink of water from a bucket on top of the end of the bar. King was standing with his back to the bar, near the bucket, and he was playing with his six-shooter, that he called 'Old Blue.'

"You know, nearly every man had some pet name for his favorite six-shooter. I knew a fellow in South Texas, Ransy Sniffle, who called his six-shooter 'Old Betsy,' and Sam Bass, the Texas outlaw, had a six-shooter he called 'Tiger.' Well, as I was saying, King had 'Old Blue' out and, with his forefinger in the trigger guard, was practising the 'roll,' twirling it around and at each revolution he would catch the stock in his hand and aim the gun, rapidly cock it and then ease the hammer down, and then roll it again. As I dipped a tin cup of water from the bucket I felt something jam into my ribs and King asked me, with an oath:

"'What're you lookin' for?'

"I knew that King had been drinking. I knew he was a killer, but the cup was at my lips and as I kept on drinking I cut my eyes down and saw King's 'Old Blue' up against my side, and its hammer cocked and his finger on the trigger. I kept on drinking, and as I dipped up the second cupful I said:

" 'I just wanted a drink, that's all.'

"I drank the second cup, with that drunken desperado jamming his gun into my ribs all the time, and then I put the cup down and went back to my game. I won't deny that I was some scared. I knew that my life was in danger; many men had been killed by drunken desperadoes with no more excuse than King had to kill me, but I also knew that I must not show fear, and so I just bluffed it through. King, I suppose, wanted to kill me just so he could add another notch to his gun, and if I had started an argument he would have done so, but my demeanor puzzled and disarmed him, and he hesitated to pull the trigger."

I was at the burial of King, Valley, Chilton and Sheets. They were buried in Tascosa's cemetery, known as Boot Hill. There was no lumber with which to make coffins. Each of the four bodies,

clothed as it was when shot down, with boots on, was simply enfolded in a blanket and lowered into the grave. The faces of the dead were not even washed, and Chilton's, especially, was caked with dried blood; he had been shot in the face. There was no ceremony of any kind. There was no one in Tascosa qualified to deliver a sermon. I feel sure there was not a Bible or prayer-book in the town. At any rate, there was no burial service of any kind. Several hundred of us cowboys stood around the yawning graves with our hats off, until they were filled with earth. Then we returned to town, thirsty, and the glasses tinkled, chips rattled on the gaming tables, the fiddlers tuned up, and life went on again as before.

I once attended the burial of a cowboy who had been shot in a quarrel on the bank of the Cimarron, and, as we all stood around the grave, our four-gallon hats in our hands, some one suggested that Bill had been a pretty good sort of a scout, and it was too bad that he had to be "buried like a dog" without even a song at his grave, and thereupon a cowboy, with voice and mien of deepest solemnity, sang the nine verses of *The Cowboy's Dream,* a favorite in every cow outfit in those days. It was sung to the

tune of *My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean* and began with:

"Last night as I lay on the prairie,
And looked at the stars in the sky,
I wondered if ever a cowboy
Would drift to that sweet bye and bye.

Roll on, roll on;
Roll on, little dogies, roll on, roll on,
Roll on, roll on;
Roll on, little dogies, roll on."

I will explain, for those unacquainted with cowboy lore, that "dogie" was the pet name of the cowboy for the cattle in his herd. As he rode with them in daylight, on the trail, he sang to them, and at night, as he circled the rounded-up herd he sang to keep them quiet, for example:

"Oh, slow up, dogies, quit your rovin' 'round,
You have wandered and tramped all over the ground;
Oh, graze along, dogies, and feed kinda slow,
And don't forever be on the go—
Oh, move slow, dogies, move slow.

"O say, little dogies, when you goin' to lay down
And quit this forever siftin' around?
My limbs are weary, my seat is sore;
Oh, lay down, dogies, like you've laid before,—
Lay down, little dogies, lay down."

Soon after the burials of the four men in Tascosa's Boot Hill the cowboys of the L. S. ranch, where King, Valley and Chilton worked, took up a collection and had a man dig and fashion and engrave three stone slabs from the bed of the Canadian River, and they were put up at the graves of the three men.

Those four bodies made twenty-nine buried there with their boots on, nearly all of them shot to death in quarrels of one kind or another. The first man buried there was a cowboy whose name has been forgotten. He was with a bunch of drunken cowboys which rode into the town yelling and firing their six-shooters. A woman was in her yard feeding her chickens as the boys rode past and one of them, through no malice, of course, but in a spirit of wild exuberance, and maybe to show what a good marksman he was, threw down at one of the chickens as he rode by and drilled it with a dead center shot. Cape Willingham was sheriff, and when the cowboys halted in front of Jack Ryan's saloon, he invited the boy who had shot the chicken to climb down off his horse and surrender to arrest. The cowboy reached for his gun, but Cape was quicker on the draw.

Tascosa had no burial place then; the town was new and there had never been a death there, so the business men got together and staked off a plot of ground on a slight knoll on the prairie just outside the cluster of adobes and the cowboy shot by Cape was buried there with his boots on. Of course, the new burial place was called Boot Hill and its population grew rapidly in the years that followed. Every frontier town in those days had its Boot Hill.

Tascosa has been wiped out. It went the way of the longhorn steer and the trail driver. I was there a couple of years ago and it was difficult for me to trace the main street amid the tangle of weeds and brush. The roofs of the houses rotted and fell in, the rains melted the walls of adobe and the winds sifted their particles over the prairie. Among the ridges of earth that were once the walls of buildings I could not identify the site of Ryan's saloon, nor Dunn's, nor the dance-hall of Captain Jinks. Boot Hill was the only spot in the town that was yet as it had been in the old days. There were the headstones marking the graves of King, Valley and Chilton, and some rotting posts at the heads of other graves. The town that had buried so many with their boots on had itself been bumped off the map.

CHAPTER IX

BORDER JUSTICE

THE first court of authority in what is now Oklahoma was the United States Court established at Fort Smith, Arkansas. It had jurisdiction in criminal cases over all of Indian Territory and No Man's Land, an area of seventy-four thousand square miles, extending from the Arkansas line away west to Colorado and New Mexico.

In that vast region the six-shooter had been the only law. Now the United States Government stepped in, and for the first time its law—backed and enforced by the six-shooter, too—was carried by its marshals out among the cattle thieves, desperadoes, murderers and whisky peddlers of that wild country.

The act of Congress creating the court gave it "exclusive, original and final jurisdiction" over all crimes committed in that territory. In 1875 Isaac C. Parker was appointed judge, and for twenty-one years he presided over it. For fourteen of those twenty-one years no appeal could be taken from his court.

No other court or judge in America was ever vested with such arbitrary power. A man charged with crime had a right to a trial by jury, of course; but those juries were selected under the eye of Judge Parker, and his instructions and charges to juries were calculated to sway and direct them.

The gallows in Fort Smith was built with a trap twenty feet long, large enough to hang twelve men at once. Before Judge Parker had been in office four months, six men were marched upon its trap and hanged in a row. It was the first time in America, probably, that six men were hanged in one group. Seven months later five men were hanged together from the same scaffold.

Twice in Judge Parker's term six men were hanged at one time. Three times five men were hanged at once. Three times four men were hanged and four times three were hanged together, while double hangings were of frequent occurrence.

Those hangings were witnessed by crowds of thousands of people, many of whom came hundreds of miles to see them, and went into camp around the scaffold; many sleeping upon the ground the night before, so as to be close to the trap when it fell.

In his twenty-one years upon the bench thirteen

thousand five hundred men were tried before Judge Parker, and nine thousand five hundred of those were either convicted or pleaded guilty. Of those, three hundred and forty-four were convicted of crimes punishable by death and one hundred and seventy-four were convicted of murder. He sentenced one hundred and seventy-two men to death, and eighty-eight of those were hanged during his term as judge.

All those crimes were committed within the Indian Territory or No Man's Land, and all those criminals came from there. Not one came from Arkansas, for although Judge Parker's court was in Arkansas it had no jurisdiction over criminal cases in that state.

The official hangman was George Maledon, a Bavarian. In the twenty-two years he was with the court he hanged eighty men and shot five escaping prisoners. Maledon was well educated, and the people of Fort Smith respected him. He was proud of his work and the notoriety it gave him. He liked to show the gallows to visitors and to tell stories of the hangings.

When I would go to Fort Smith with prisoners I always went to the jail to see Maledon. He strange-

ly attracted me. I wondered how a man could follow such a business and be proud of it. He had one rope with which he had hanged thirty men, another that had broken the necks of eleven men, and a third that had hanged nine. He loved to handle those ropes, to tell how they were made to order for him in St. Louis, of the best hemp fiber, woven by hand. He would show how the hangman's knot was tied. One day I asked him:

"Why do you tie such a big knot?"

My interest and curiosity pleased him. He gathered his beard into a bunch and pulled it through his hand several times as he explained:

"Not many people notice that. But the big knot is the secret of a good execution. The right way and the humane way to hang a man is to break his neck, not to strangle him to death. It takes a long time to strangle a man to death, and it isn't pretty to look at, for he kicks a good deal. But, if you break his neck there are no contortions. He is unconscious the instant the neck breaks, and he hangs motionless. It is a painless death, and as instantaneous as any death can be. I have broken the necks of every man I have hanged. Every one of my hangings was a scientific job. I dropped six through at once and

there wasn't a quiver among them, not even a foot moved. There they were, in a row, all exactly the same distance from the ground, just swaying and twirling a little as they hung.

"You put the rope around the neck this way," and he illustrated it by putting the rope around his own neck. "You draw it just tight enough to touch the skin all around, without choking or interfering with the circulation of the blood, and put the big knot right under the left ear, this way, so it lies in the hollow back of the jawbone. Then, here's a little secret the most of them don't know; to keep the knot from slipping out of position below the ear, you bring the rope up this way, over the top of the head, and let it hang down in a curve on the other side. That holds the knot steady under the ear, and when you spring the trap the man drops through, and when the rope snaps taut that big knot throws his head sidewise and cracks his neck in a jiffy. It always works that way for me. That's why they call me the prince of hangmen."

"You've hanged so many, do thoughts of them ever come to bother you at night?" I asked him cautiously.

"No," he replied, with a laugh. "No ghosts have

ever haunted me. If there are any ghosts I guess they get hanged, too. If you mean, does my conscience ever bother me, I can say no, not a bit. In hanging those men I did my duty. I never hanged a man that didn't deserve it. Most of them deserved worse than hanging."

After the court was abolished Maledon gathered up his traps and ropes, put them in a tent and went around exhibiting them and made enough money to buy a farm in Arkansas, where he died recently.

Judge Parker's court became known throughout the Indian Territory as the "Gates of Hell." Out in No Man's Land, at the crossing of two cattle trails, was a sign, made of a sycamore post set in the ground with a board and rudely carved finger pointing eastward, and upon it was the legend in black paint:

FIVE HUNDRED MILES TO FORT SMITH.

Some one had added two words and the sign read:

FIVE HUNDRED MILES TO FORT SMITH AND HELL.

Judge Parker and his court and the gallows became noted over all the country. Newspaper men came from even the far East to write about the hangings in Fort Smith, and Judge Parker was

given a reputation as a judicial ogre. He was denounced as "Hanging Parker" and "Bloody Parker" and "Butcher Parker." In the last years of his term a movement began to abolish his court. Senator Vest, of Missouri, said on the floor of the United States Senate that the court of Judge Parker was a "shambles, a butcher's domain, a stench and a disgrace to civilization and humanity."

I went often to Fort Smith with prisoners from the Territory. Bill Tilghman and I went there once with twenty-one prisoners. Eight of those men were afterward convicted in Judge Parker's court and hanged, but at least fifteen of them deserved hanging. I heard some of his famous charges to juries and his vitriolic diatribes in sentencing criminals to be hanged.

Parker was a good judge. We need more of his brand of justice and less maudlin sympathy for criminals to-day. Off the bench Parker was a gentle courtly man and the people of Fort Smith honored him. If I should offer any criticism of him it would be that his charges to his juries were not impartial expositions of the law; they were really arguments for conviction, and his harangues in sentencing men to death were cruel and unnecessary. They were too

much like the cat playing with the mouse; but no doubt he did those things for the deterrent effect they would have upon other criminals.

In those early days Indian Territory was overrun with criminals, many of them fugitives from justice in other states. The Territory was a sort of "place of refuge" for criminals from all parts of the country. If they could once reach that lawless land they were safe. Thousands of those criminals, raked out of the Territory by United States marshals, passed before Judge Parker in endless procession. During his term as judge sixty-five United States deputy marshals were murdered while on duty in his jurisdiction. I heard Judge Parker speak of Indian Territory as "The Land of the Six-shooter" and as "Robbers' Roost."

In sentencing Henry Starr to be hanged for killing a deputy, he said, "You tried this brave officer of the law, condemned him to death and executed him with a six-shooter; and now it is only simple justice that you should die at the end of a rope."

Judge Parker believed there were born criminals; that a baby might come into life with the mark of Cain on its brow. He said so, often. To him the law was a fearful and sublime avenger, and he and his

court the arbiters in a fierce contest between civilization and savagery.

"I never hanged a man—it was the law," he said once.

I was in his court when a murder trial was drawing to a close. The accused was a young man of good appearance and manners. He was ably defended. His father, mother and sister, respected people, were in court beside him. After the jury retired to consider its verdict, there was some belief among court attaches that there might be an acquittal. Judge Parker evidently shared this doubt of conviction, for when the jury returned with a verdict of guilty of murder in the first degree he said, "Gentlemen, you have done your duty."

Turning to the landlord of the hotel where the jury ate its meals, he asked, "Have you prepared a good meal for these men?" The hotel man nodded and the judge continued: "Then take them over and give them a good dinner. They deserve it."

While this was going on, the convicted man and his parents and sister formed a pitiful group, clasped in one another's arms and moaning. The man was guilty. Judge Parker knew it, and in his heart was no sympathy for him.

One of the most fiendishly cruel criminals I ever knew was the Indian outlaw, Cherokee Bill. He had murdered thirteen men, one of them his own brother-in-law. Bill was leader of a bandit gang composed of "Chicken," "Skeeter," Long Gordon, Curtis Dason, Verdigris Kid and Dooley Benge. Bill was a large man and a Samson in strength. He and his band won several pitched battles with posses that went to catch him, and when he was finally taken, by strategy, his strength was so great he snapped the handcuffs that linked his wrists together.

He was convicted of murder and Judge Parker sentenced him to death. This was in the latter years of Judge Parker's term, after Congress had given convicted ones the right of appeal from that court. Cherokee Bill had taken an appeal and while in jail, awaiting a decision, he became morose and obstinate. There were fifty-nine men in that jail under sentence of death at the time, and all had the freedom of the floor and mingled with one another in the daytime but were locked in their cells at night. It was a desperate gang, and Bill was the worst of all. Some one smuggled a six-shooter in to Bill and with it he held up the guards and killed one. Other

guards came running up and as they came Bill began a sniping match with them. Every time he fired he gobbled. This gobble was peculiarly Indian, an unearthly sound something like the howl of a coyote and the gobble of a turkey cock merged. It was a death cry among the Territory Indians. A defendant before Parker once pleaded that he had killed another Indian because the latter gobbled at him. The prosecutor was aghast at the flippancy of the excuse, but the defendant introduced several witnesses who testified that when an Indian gobbled he meant sudden death to any or all in his path.

Henry Starr, a bandit under sentence of death, and himself part Cherokee, offered to help quiet Bill and the guards told him to go ahead.

"Bill, the guards have promised that if you will give up your gun and surrender they will not harm you. You can't get anywhere by killing a lot of people. You can't get out now, stop it and give up your gun," urged Starr.

"I'm going to kill every white man in sight, and if you don't hike out of range I'll kill you, too," Bill growled.

Starr had noticed that on several occasions when Cherokee's old mother came to see him, Bill had sat

all the time with his arm around her. He loved his mother and she was probably the only person on earth he had any regard for. There is a soft spot in every man's heart, somewhere, if you only know where to find it, and Bill's soft spot was his love for his mother.

"Bill," called Starr, "you know your mother wouldn't want you to kill any more men than you've already killed. Don't make it any harder for her."

Bill handed his six-shooter to Starr and surrendered to him. Bill was tried at once for the murder of the guard, and was convicted. I was in court when Judge Parker sentenced Cherokee Bill a second time to be hanged. It was a hair-raising denouncement, and I could almost repeat it from memory but it would be too lengthy to reproduce here. Among the things Judge Parker said, as I recall them, were:

"You are a double-dyed monster. Behind you lies a long red wake of human gore. Your hands are steeped in it and your heart reeks with infamy. With hideous mien you stood at bay and fired shot after shot at the brave officers who gathered to control you, and now you come here, with this long list of murders behind you, that should cause even the

imps of hell to shudder, and ask mercy from this court. Mercy! Mercy! You most ferocious of monsters, you plead for mercy, you, a creature whose very existence is a disgrace upon nature, a grievous burden to the atmosphere from which you draw breath! Away with you, you most fiendish of all monsters. Life is to you but a hollow mockery. Why should you plead for life? Away with creatures of your ilk, not fit to exist upon this fair land. It is too bad that you have only one life the law can take, otherwise you would be hanged thirteen times, once for each of the murders you have done.

"May the Good Giver of all forbid that ever another such creature as you should be given the breath of life. Better that you should have been strangled at birth than that you should ever have arrived at the age we call manhood, which you have desecrated until all nature points the finger of scorn toward those responsible for your having been born."

Bill's mother sat beside him in the court room and heard it all, and she followed him to the scaffold. She was not permitted to accompany him in his death walk from cell to gallows, but as he stood on the trap, with Maledon strapping his ankles to-

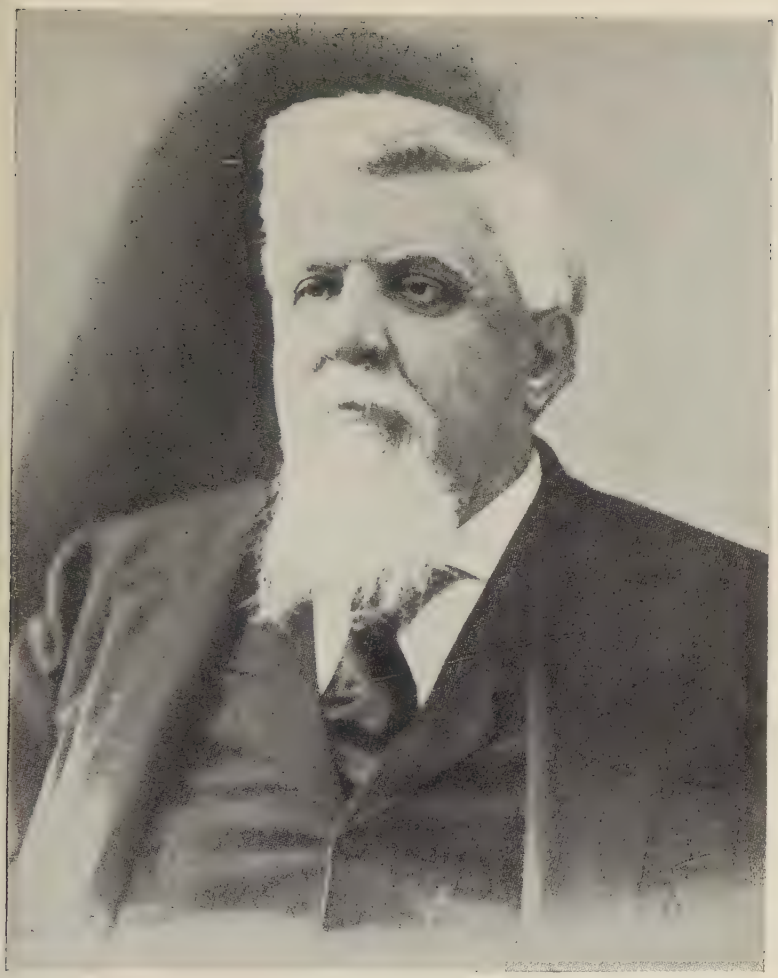

Photo from Mr. Macdonald's Collection

JUDGE ISAAC C. PARKER

He presided over the court in Fort Smith, Arkansas, where hundreds of border bandits were tried and sentenced to be hanged

A colony of Boomers moving down Washington Avenue, Wellington, Kansas, into forbidden Oklahoma, in 1882

Photo from Mr. Macdonald's Collection

Oklahoma City's first Fourth of July, 1889; soldiers drawn up in the streets and the Santa Fé train arriving with a holiday crowd

Photo from Mr. Sutton's Collection

gether, he looked out and saw his mother in the crowd.

"Mother, you shouldn't have come here," he called to her.

"I can go wherever you go, Billy," she called back.

"Do you want to say anything to the crowd?" asked the hangman.

"No, I didn't come here to windjam; I come to die," was his answer.

When they cut his body down they found under his blouse a photograph of his mother, lying over his heart, and upon the back he had scrawled a verse of his own composition:

"MY DREAM

"I drempt I was in heaven, among the angels fair,
I'd near seen none so hansome, that twine in golden hair.
They look so neat and sang so sweet,
And playd the golden harp; I was about to pick an angel out,
And take her to my heart.
But the moment I begun to plea, I thought of you my love,
There was none Id seen so beautiful, on earth or heaven above,

Forgive me, mother, mother dear, I hope my
dream comes true,
And we will meet on golden street and happy be
with you."

The photograph, with the verse on the back, was given to Cherokee Bill's mother. She called at the jail to see Henry Starr and showed it to him. The bandit read it, returned it to her and said earnestly, "Bury it with him. When God sees it maybe He'll take him in."

Henry Starr was the only man I ever knew who denounced Judge Parker to his face in open court.

"Have you anything to say why the judgment of the court should not be carried out upon you?" the court asked.

"Are you going to sentence me to death?" asked Starr.

"It becomes my duty to do so under the law," said the judge.

"What law have you for that?" demanded Starr. "In this case there is only one law—the law of self-defense. That is the law of God and man. Under that law it was my duty to kill Floyd Wilson. You know that. It was proved here. You can not sentence me to death under that law. Under what law

are you proceeding when you sentence me to be hanged?"

Judge Parker ignored him and started to make his usual lengthy lecture, denouncing Starr, when Starr interrupted him with:

"Don't try to stare me down, old Nero. I've looked many a better man than you in the eye. Cut out the rot and save your wind for your next victim. If I am a monster, you are a fiend, for I have put only one man to death, while almost as many have been slaughtered by your jawbone as Samson slew with the jawbone of that other historic ass."

He actually bluffed Judge Parker so that he stopped his harangue and pronounced the sentence. Starr appealed, got a new trial, was convicted and sentenced to death again by Judge Parker; appealed again, was granted another new trial, and just then Judge Parker was retired. Another judge took his place and he permitted Starr to plead guilty to manslaughter for the killing of Wilson, and reduced his term for train robbery, so that Starr went to the penitentiary at Columbus, Ohio, for thirteen years. He served more than half that term, and was pardoned by President Roosevelt, to whom he gave a promise that he would live honestly thereafter. He died

eventually, however, with his boots on while robbing a bank.

Times changed, the Indian Territory began to settle up and settle down, other courts were established, and the Fort Smith tribunal was stripped by Congress of its extraordinary powers. Stung by what he felt was unjust criticism, Parker died within a few weeks after his removal from his office. He and his court passed out together.

CHAPTER X

BOOMING INTO OKLAHOMA

THE coming of the settlers to plow and fence the free range was the beginning of the last act of the great American Wild West Show; but that last act was, in many ways, the shootingest of all.

Those pioneer farmers who plodded into the range country with a plow, a cookstove, a bed, a skillet and a family in a covered wagon, and settled along the watercourses, were nesters to the cowmen and the Indians, who alike hated and despised them because they broke the sod and fenced the prairies, driving away the Indians' game and cramping the cattlemen's style.

"Nester" was a term of contempt, denoting a creature so low as to be content to nest in a two-by-four plot of only one hundred and sixty acres and grub his living meanly out of the soil, instead of ranging the plains high, wide and handsome. In it, too, was something of the ancient scorn of the horseman for the foot slogger. Few nesters but had to fight to hold their ground, many a cabin went up in smoke

and not a few families were frightened out, sometimes leaving dead behind them.

Oklahoma Territory was the last great tract of arable land opened to settlement, and the bars came down only after years of struggle, political machinations in Washington, and sometimes warfare between the cattlemen and the land-hungry farmer.

The most noted leader of those farmers was David L. Payne, who gave his best years, and eventually his life, to the cause. Payne was to that movement what John Brown of Ossawatomie was to the campaign to free the slaves. Payne would organize a colony of settlers, move with them into the Indian Territory and squat. As that whole country was reserved for the Indians, the government would send troops to arrest Payne and move him and his colonists out. Payne would organize another colony and the same thing would be repeated.

He was a born orator, and he became the evangelist of that promised land, going up and down the border, preaching that it was a sinful waste for that rich soil to be held for a few Indians who would not till it, while so many farmers were eager to go in and possess it and improve it. Many thought him a dreamer and a crank, but he knew that every colony

that went and was expelled stirred up the agitation and hastened the day when the land would be opened.

I became one of Payne's Oklahoma boomers in 1883, and went with his colony to Rock Falls, where we formed a settlement. We even had a newspaper, the *War Chief*. In 1884 United States troops took all of us beyond the border and destroyed or dispersed our belongings, including the printing press, which was smashed.

One of my possessions, of which I am vastly proud, is a certificate of membership in Payne's Oklahoma Colony, dated at Wichita, Kansas, July 9, 1883, and signed by William L. Couch, president, and A. C. McCord, secretary. It is framed and hangs on the wall of my home—a rare document.

Payne died suddenly in 1884 at Wellington, Kansas, while at breakfast. His friends believed then, and I believe yet, that he was poisoned by those who opposed the opening of Oklahoma. His death filled the Oklahoma boomers with resentment, focused public attention upon the opening of the territory, and hastened it. The first opening came soon thereafter. Moses led the Israelites to the edge of Canaan, but died just before they went

in to possess it. So Payne led his Oklahoma boomers through a wilderness of struggle and was permitted only to view the promised land. He will live in history as the Father of Oklahoma. Payne County is named for him.

William L. Couch, who as president signed my certificate, raced in on horseback in the first opening of Oklahoma and took a quarter-section of wild prairie land which is now in the heart of Oklahoma City. The court-house stands on it. There was another claimant to the same land and he lay behind a pile of fence posts and shot and killed Couch, so all his work to have the country opened brought only death to Couch, as it did to Payne and to many others, for nearly every farm and town lot in the new land had several claimants, and final ownership was often decided by a six-shooter.

Oklahoma was opened to settlers in sections, in different years. In all those openings the land was taken by running in, or racing for it from the border, with the exception of the Big Pasture, or Lawton drawing, in which the lands were apportioned in a lottery.

Bill Tilghman and I took part in all those openings and we saw Oklahoma City, Guthrie, Chand-

ler, Lawton and other places grow in a day from nothing or a few houses apiece to cities.

In the opening of the Sac and Fox Indian country, Tilghman won a fine farm of one hundred and sixty acres near Chandler. He went there to live and was twice elected sheriff and once state senator by that county. I was unlucky in all the openings except the Cherokee Strip, in 1893. The strip was one hundred and fifty miles long and eighty miles wide, as fine a body of land as ever a crow flew over. I already knew almost every square mile of that tract. I had raced across it in the first opening of old Oklahoma in 1889, when I ran to Guthrie and arrived too late to be a prize winner.

At a United States deputy marshal, and as a buyer of cavalry horses for the government, I had ridden over most of it and had camped on every one of its watercourses. After the government decided to open the Strip I went into it again and looked it over. I saw that Wharton, later re-named Perry, was to be the big town and I made up my mind to try for a farm as close to that place as I could.

The government surveyed the tract, laid it off into farms of one hundred and sixty acres each, selected

town sites and staked them off into lots, and set a day for the opening. I knew that the fastest horses in the West would be entered in this greatest race that was ever run, in which the prize was a farm or town lot to every winner. But the race is not always to the swift. It is often to the one that can stand the gaff and stick to the end.

Two months before the opening day I bought a white mustang, or Indian pony, five years old, that had never been harnessed or ridden. I knew by experience that this kind of mount had every quality necessary to win in the race I was going to run. He was fast; but better, he had endurance that had come down through his ancestors. Other horses in the race might be fleeter of foot, but none would have better staying qualities.

It took three weeks of constant handling and gentling before I had that Indian pony broken so he would let me mount him. Then I began training both him and myself to develop our wind and toughen us for the race. Each day for thirty days I rode the mustang as fast as he could be driven, out from Oklahoma City nine miles and right back again, a continuous ride of eighteen miles. At the end of that time he could run the eighteen miles in

one hour without stopping and without becoming winded.

One of the rules of the opening was that every one that made the run must first register with a government agent and get a certificate, and he must keep off the Strip until noon of the day of the opening. A few days before the opening I went to Orlando to register. I expected to get through with it in an hour or two, but when I reached Orlando there was a line of men and women stretching out from the agent's window for fully a mile. I fell in at the tail end, and the line soon reached behind me a quarter of a mile more. We moved up a short step at a time, then a long wait, and another step. If a man fell out he lost his place. I was in line for fifty-eight hours. For three days and two nights I was on my feet, slowly inching forward, without a wink of sleep, the hot sun baking me all day, a thick dry dust rising in clouds and clogging mouth and nostrils, with no chance to wash and without a morsel to eat until the second night, when I heard my name called.

A man was going up and down the line looking for me. It was Mysterious Charlie Johnson, a friend of the old Dodge City days. He had

heard I was in the line and he came to me with sandwiches and a few bottles of beer.

The race was run September 16, 1893. The government had moved all squatters and others off the tract to be opened, and soldiers were stationed on the borders to prevent any one from venturing in until the exact minute of noon on that day.

I went to Orlando early the morning of the race. It was a town of two hundred people; but now thirty thousand men and women were there, milling around and hungry and thirsty, for no one had expected such a crowd. All the food in the village stores had been eaten the night before and the wells had been pumped almost dry. I found feed and water for my pony, but could get no breakfast for myself.

An old freighters' road from Orlando to Perry crossed the border there, and as it followed an almost straight line, my plan was to travel that road. At regular distances inside the line cavalry rode patrol. On our side of the line, in sight to the right and left, were thirty thousand people. Most of them had been looking with yearning eyes for ten years and longer to this day. They were the land-hungry ones from all parts of the nation. Among them were

hundreds of the original Oklahoma boomers of Payne's colonies. All were as impatient, as eager, as greedy for the land ahead as they would have been if they were starving and it was food instead of land to be raced for. They chafed, crowded, cursed and even fought for places near the line, and the din they made blended into a great roar. Over all hung a thick cloud of dust.

As noon drew near, the impatience grew. The shouting and cursing became like the growling roar of penned-up hungry animals. The last five minutes seemed like a day and the last minute like an hour. Then came the crack of the soldiers' guns, and the horde surged forward over the line, on horseback, on bicycles, in all imaginable kinds of wagons, buggies, buckboards, and on foot.

As I waited in the line I was wedged in between a big man and a little woman. The man was a plainsman with a bushy beard, a six-shooter in his belt, a wooden leg and a jug of whisky, of which he had been drinking freely. He was mounted on an Indian pony like mine.

The young woman was not more than eighteen, I judged, and a beauty. She was mounted on a coal-black thoroughbred. She told me she had trained

him for the race; and so she might split the wind more easily, she had shortened sail and wore black tights and a skullcap. It developed that the three of us were going to race for Perry. I remarked that I aimed to be the first man to reach Perry.

She laughed and retorted, "Just follow me and I'll show you the way."

The big man with the wooden leg and the jug interrupted with: "I'll tell 'em in Perry that you're both a-comin'."

At the crack of the rifles we started in that order, the big man on my left and the girl on my right, and for a mile we kept side by side. The old freight trail was two wheel ruts a foot deep, worn into the prairie sod. The man's pony kept in one rut, the girl's horse in the other, and I rode on the raised place in the middle. Each was pushing his mount as hard as he could to keep ahead of the mob. The big man's pony had not been trained for such a spurt, and when he lagged, the old fellow, pretty drunk by that time, began to larrup his flanks and yell and swear.

As I galloped I heard behind me a great shout of many throats. I looked back over my shoulder and saw that his pony had stumbled and fallen. His

jug, smashed into pieces, was scattered ahead of him, his gun flew in another direction, and he fell full-length into the rut of the road. I had only a glimpse of him, for in an instant he was hidden in a welter of pounding hoofs and flying dirt. He must have been trampled to death as that mad mob charged over him.

The girl and I were in the lead. She bent low over her horse's neck, talking to him and urging him on, but a sixteen-mile run like that was too much for a race-horse trained to short bursts of speed, and he slackened into a trot just as my Indian pony was getting his second wind.

One reason why I had chosen the freighters' trail was that big areas of the prairie through which it led were covered with heavy growths of bluejoint grass, from six to eight feet tall, and a horse could be forced through it only at a slow pace. That jungle of grass kept many a racer from winning a farm that day.

Half-way to Perry I saw that the plain ahead was on fire. The dry grass had been set ablaze in many places, supposedly by sooners. A sooner was one who had evaded the guards and sneaked in before the hour of opening. As I neared the fire I saw that if

I would go on I must plunge through it. The grass, thick and high, grew close up to the trail, but in the narrow trail there was none; and where it led through the flames there was an open space, like a notch in a range of hills. I made for that opening and bent low as we dashed through. The blaze singed my hair to the scalp below my hat and a tongue of it licked my face. Poor little mustang, it singed his coat to the hide spots, and he began to cough and sneeze.

Farther on we came to a sooner camped at a white stake beside the road. In this fellow's wagon was a barrel of water. As I rode up he drew a six-shooter and motioned me to keep on going.

I halted and he yelled, "This is my claim! Keep on traveling unless you want to leave your bones here."

"I don't want your claim. I'm riding to Perry. I want to buy a drink of water for my horse and myself," I said.

He refused at first, but finally let me have two pints at a dollar a pint. I took a small sup and with the rest bathed the nose and face of my mount, wet my handkerchief and swabbed his throat with it, and we went on.

Just before I reached the land I was riding for, I had to leave the trail and cut across the prairie, and there I came to one of those deep gullies common in the plains country. It begins with a crack in the dry earth in time of drought, and is enlarged by each succeeding rain until it becomes a small canyon. This one was ten feet deep and almost that wide. There was no way around it, so I took a running start and urged my pony to a leap. He did his best, but did not quite make it. He fell across the farther edge, was broken down in his loins and died the next day. From the ditch to my claim was only a hundred yards. I made in on foot, planted my flag and stood guard over it. I was the first man to reach Perry that day. My little pony had won the race against thousands of contestants but gave his life in doing it, and I am not ashmed to say that his head was on my lap and in my arms when he died.

My familiarity with a six-shooter was of good service to me the first and second day in Perry, for without it I would have lost my one hundred and sixty acres. I had to drive off three different claim-jumpers. One drove up and started to dump a load of lumber on it. He showed fight and I was really afraid I would have to shoot him.

I believe that nine-tenths of the settlers in the Cherokee Strip won their homesteads and lots with the six-shooter. It might almost be said that Oklahoma was settled by the six-shooter, for in none of the openings were there enough farms or town lots to supply all who raced, and a man who was unarmed or unwilling to fight had a slim chance to hold his land, even if he got there first. Thousands who reached the land first, and were clearly entitled to hold it, were driven off at gun point. Many were killed and their land taken.

I reached Perry before two o'clock that afternoon and I saw the place grow in six hours to a tented city of ten thousand people. Before dark, saloons and gambling and dancing places in tents were going. Beer sold for a dollar a bottle, ice for twenty-five cents a pound, coffee for seventy-five cents a tin cup, ham sandwiches for a dollar, and water could not be had at any price.

With the racers had come riffraff from every part of the country. There was no town government. The leading men of the new town held a council. At that time Bill Tilghman was marshal of Guthrie. He had been a peace officer on the border for more than twenty years and was known as a man of iron nerve.

A hurry-up messenger was sent to ask Tilghman to come and keep peace in Perry. He came, with his winning smile, his two silver-mounted six-shooters and his sawed-off rifle.

Late that first afternoon Tilghman and I were standing in front of my tent when Crescent Sam came along. His nickname came from a long crescent-shaped scar on his cheek, caused by a powder burn. Crescent Sam was a "long rider" with the Bill Doolin gang, which had headquarters on Horseshoe Ranch, in a remote and wild part of the Indian country.

"Hello, Crescent! When did you leave the Horseshoe outfit, and when are you going back?" asked Tilghman.

"I'm going back when I get good and ready, and not before," replied the outlaw.

Tilghman said, in his quiet way, "Crescent, I am marshal here. Don't let the setting sun find you on this town site."

"I'll be here after the sun goes down, all right," the outlaw answered.

"Don't do it, Crescent, that's all," Tilghman warned.

That night Tilghman and I strolled down an

avenue between two rows of tents, toward the Buckhorn, a saloon and dance-hall under canvas, lighted by six large coal-oil lamps. As we neared it Crescent Sam stepped out of its door holding a six-shooter.

He fired twice at the moon and wailed: "I'm a wild wolf and it's my night to howl! If there's a hombre in this man's town can send me home till I'm ready to go, I'd like to see the color of his hair."

At that moment he spied Tilghman, and for a second or two they stood and eyed each other, Tilghman with a six-shooter in his hand, ready, and the outlaw with his.

Crescent fired first, from the hip. Tilghman fired so soon after that the two reports sounded almost like one. The outlaw fell. Tilghman blew the smoke from the barrel of his gun, shoved in another cartridge, raised his left arm and examined a hole where the bullet from Crescent's gun had gone through both coat and shirt, and then stepped over to where the dead bandit lay.

He looked down at him and said, "Poor fool! He belonged to a day that is passing. To-day a new Oklahoma was born, and the day is coming when it will be a crime here even to carry a gun."

A tent, which I had arranged to follow me by

wagon to Perry, arrived at sundown. I set it up and late that night lay down under my own roof on my own homestead, a saddle my pillow. Before I fell asleep a bullet struck the horn of the saddle, glanced and went through the tent top. The report of a second shot followed and something fell heavily against my tent flap. I scrambled out and found a dead man at my door. He had been killed as he passed my tent. Who he was or who shot him I never learned.

CHAPTER XI

THE WILD BUNCH

After Oklahoma was opened to settlement, and was gradually emerging from wildness into civilization, there arose a crop of outlaws the like of which this country never had before. They were mostly cowboys. The open range was gone, cut up into farms and fenced. Highways and railroads obliterated the old Indian paths and cattle trails. The smoke of the locomotive replaced the clouds of dust that used to hover above the cattle herds. Towns were built almost overnight. The cowboy of that country found his occupation gone. Many migrated to the ranches of Texas and the West and North. Others settled on farms and in towns and were among the best citizens of the embryo state. But the wildest ones, bred to the open prairie and the saddle, fearless, used to danger, the six-shooter a tool of their trade, scorned to be cramped on a quarter-section of land, or to be confined within the limits of a town. They despised the whole rabble brought in by the opening—the nesters, small farmers, railroad men, tradesmen and white-collar dudes—and many

of the most reckless among them drifted into banditry.

Those outlaws who had been cowboys were a wonderful, yet absurd combination of chivalry, shrewdness, badness, goodness and dare-devilishness. I was personally acquainted with nearly all of them. The leaders of those cowboy-outlaws of the plains must not be catalogued with the type of modern pay-roll and bank bandits of the big cities of America. These latter are of a different breed. They are the degenerate product of the city slums, brothers to the sewer rats of the same districts, shifty-eyed, treacherous prowlers, puffed up with the false courage that comes from heroin and cocaine, who kill without reason and whine and sniffle and snitch when captured. The majority of those outlaws who had been cowboys had a sort of Robin-Hood chivalry along with their devilishness. There was a grandiose gesture to the most of their robbing and fighting. They and the man-hunters who cut them off, their battles and dare-devil feats are a part of the history of early Oklahoma, and will live in its legends as long as that state exists.

I do not write to glorify banditry. It was a foolhardy sordid enterprise filled with hardships and

risks and heartbreaks, and even the most successful of those who embarked in it were like the flowers of the field that spring up to flourish for a brief season and be cut down. No man can beat the law. The odds are too many against him. Every last one of those outlaws came to a bad end, was shot down and died with his boots on, or in prison.

Those outlaws ran in gangs. They were constantly being hunted down and killed, were disintegrating, reorganizing, merging into other gangs. An outlaw would develop into a leader, form a band of his own and lead it until he was killed. Thus, Bill Doolin was a member of the Dalton gang. He and the Daltons had been cowboys together. Doolin was a broncho buster, a noted rider and two-gun man, a dead shot with rifle or six-shooter, a big, broad-shouldered, masterful, fear-proof man, ready at any time to lay down his life for his men, and they would follow him anywhere. He could scarcely read or write, but he had a native shrewdness that enabled him to outwit, for longer than the average outlaw, the officers who were trailing him.

Doolin was with the Dalton gang on its ride to Coffeyville, but his horse went lame the night before, and the band rode on. Doolin stole another

horse, a thoroughbred, and followed on. He topped a hill, came in sight of the roofs of Coffeyville and saw riding toward him a lone horseman. Years afterward Doolin, in jail in Guthrie, told me about it.

"When I saw that rider coming at a gallop I knew that something had gone wrong, but I didn't have to ask what it was. He reined up in front of me, so excited that he could hardly talk, and asked:

" 'Have you met any bandits down this road?'

" 'No,' I said.

" 'They came this way. The Dalton gang rode into town this morning, three went into one bank, two into another, got twenty thousand dollars from one and eleven thousand dollars from the other, and when they come out it looked like the whole town had rallied against them. It was a battle! The Daltons killed four, and four of them were killed. One was shot full of lead and they've got him in jail. They say some escaped and they're making up a posse. They sent me down this road to warn everybody.'

" 'Holy smoke!' I said to him. 'I'll just wheel around right here and go on ahead of you down this

road and carry the news. Mine is a faster horse than yours.'"

The lone rider had been mistaken in his belief that some of the robbers had escaped. There were only five in the band; four were killed and they killed four citizens of the town. In the midst of the battle Emmett Dalton reached his horse, tied in an alley, mounted it and might have escaped; but he saw his brother Grat, wounded and staggering blindly. Emmett rode back into the thick of the fight, tried to lift Grat to his saddle and was himself shot down and captured.

Later he went to the Kansas penitentiary, served a long term and came out to be a good citizen.

All that afternoon and night Doolin rode his best. As he passed through a village some men saw him coming and gathered in the street to stop him.

"Hi!" he shouted. "The Dalton gang has robbed two banks in Coffeyville and some of 'em escaped down this way. I'm ridin' to warn everybody to be on the lookout."

And he galloped on, never stopping until he reached a friendly camp west of Tulsa. There he rested and organized the most vicious, reckless gang of outlaws ever known in the Southwest. In it were

Bill Dalton, brother of the three Daltons shot in the Coffeyville raid; Bitter Creek; Arkansaw Tom, sometimes called the Gentleman Outlaw, who had killed a dozen men; Red Buck, a manslayer who said he liked to shoot a man "just to see the fellow fall"; Little Bill, a renegade college graduate, formerly of Pennsylvania; Charley Pierce, so reckless that his outlaw associates nicknamed him the Wild Man; Little Dick, of the Three-Circle Ranch, who was born on the prairie and would not sleep in a room, but even in the coldest, roughest weather would roll up in his saddle blankets on the ground; Tulsa Jack and Dynamite Dick. For years this gang was known as the "Wild Bunch." Each man of it had been a cowboy, was an expert shot, a killer, had no fear of man or death and had sworn never to be taken alive.

They robbed trains, banks and stores, and stole horses and cattle. Bill Tilghman made a list of the amount they got in their largest robberies. I have that list before me now. The total is one hundred and sixty-nine thousand five hundred dollars, divided as follows: bank at Pawnee, ten thousand dollars; Gordon train robbery, sixty-seven thousand dollars; Santa Fé train robbery at Cimarron, thir-

teen thousand dollars; bank at Southwest City, fifteen thousand dollars; bank at Derby, three thousand dollars; bank at Spearville, five thousand dollars; bank in Texas, fifty thousand dollars; express office at Woodward, sixty-five hundred dollars.

Business men, the railroads and express companies asked the government to give them a marshal who would exterminate the outlaws, and E. D. Nix was appointed for that express purpose. He selected as his field marshals only frontiersmen who were experienced man hunters, and his instructions to them were, "Go and get 'em!"

Bill Tilghman, Chris Madsen and Heck Thomas were known among the field marshals as the Three Guardsmen. Another great marshal of that day was Bud Ledbetter, who captured Al Jennings and his gang.

As an incentive to the marshals the business interests of Oklahoma posted large rewards for the capture of different outlaws. There was a reward of five thousand dollars on the head of Bill Doolin. A posse of marshals was after him when he held up a Santa Fé train at Cimarron, Kansas. It chased him southward into Oklahoma, and in that running fight Doolin was shot in the foot. Arkansaw Tom

carried him to the H. X. Bar Ranch and nursed him back to health.

Then the marshals heard that Doolin and his gang were gathered at Ingalls, preparing for another raid. What is known as the Ingalls fight, the most desperate battle that ever occurred between bandits and law officers, followed. Tilghman, John Hixon, Jim Masterson—brother of Bat—Lafe Shadley, Dick Speed and A. H. Houston organized a posse and divided it into little groups, in covered wagons and on horseback, aiming to reach Ingalls at the same hour from different directions. Tilghman's team ran away, his leg was broken and he was not in the battle.

Ingalls, now a booming oil town, was then just a wide place in the road, a cow town, far from a railroad, with a hotel, a saloon, two or three stores, a livery stable and maybe a dozen houses. The posse got under cover behind buildings and trees, fences and wagons, and sent a messenger to tell Doolin he was surrounded, with no chance to escape. His answer was, "Go to hell!"

The bandits were scattered when the fight began, in the saloon, hotel, stores and houses. Each tried to reach the livery barn, where their horses were.

Every little while a bandit would stick his head out or dart across the street or between buildings, rifles and six-shooters would crack, little puffs of dust would snap out from his clothing where the bullets had hit, and he would head in for shelter. Men of the posse were hit, too, as they dodged out for better sniping advantages.

When the battle began, Arkansaw Tom was sick in bed in a room on the second story of the hotel. He knew instantly what the shots meant, crawled out of bed, got his rifle and began shooting. His window commanded the street. The fire of the posse was centered on that window. Tom backed away from it and barricaded himself behind a bureau and a washstand.

Bullets smashed the water pitcher and bowl and splashed water over him. Another crashed into the mirror and splattered him with glass.

His comrades were creeping and dodging from one shelter to another, trying to reach their horses, and the firing grew so heavy upon the window of Arkansaw Tom's room that he could not help them from there. Dragging his rifle, he crawled up a ladder into the attic and with the muzzle of his rifle poked a hole through the shingle roof. He thrust the

barrel through and shot from there, killing Marshal Houston and wounding several others.

The Rose of the Cimarron, sweetheart of Bitter Creek, was in the hotel when the fight began, but Bitter Creek was across the street. From a window she saw that he was wounded, had run out of cartridges, and was snapping his empty six-shooters at the marshals. She ran to his room on the second floor of the hotel, got his rifle and ammunition belt, tied them to a corner of a sheet, lowered them to the ground on a sheltered side of the hotel, lowered herself by two more sheets tied together, and in the thickest of the fight ran across the street in a hail of bullets and gave them to Bitter Creek. But on the way a bullet, barely missing her, shot away the magazine of the rifle and it was useless.

A marshal crept up to the hotel to set it on fire and smoke Arkansaw Tom out. The landlady, Mrs. Pierce, a widow, begged him to spare the building and promised to make Arkansaw Tom surrender. She went to the attic. Tom's last cartridge was gone, but he was snapping the empty gun at the posse. She threw his rifle and six-shooters out the window and led him, bleeding from bullet wounds, down to the marshal. Even then he tried to snatch the six-

shooter from the marshal's hand. His wrists and ankles were tied, he was left on the floor, and the marshal went back to the fight in the street.

After an hour of that the remainder of the bandits reached the barn. Bitter Creek, with Rose's arms around him, helping him to crawl, and half dragging him, was the last to get in. The fire of the posse now was concentrated on the barn, riddling it with bullets. Doolin ordered the other bandits to get away by a rear door. They refused to go unless he went too.

"Me and Dalton will stay and hold the posse back; you all hike out," commanded Doolin.

"They'll get you," said Little Bill.

"Who's boss here? Get out!" said Doolin.

The others mounted and dashed out the rear door. Marshal Dick Speed saw the movement and stepped into the open where he could command it with his rifle.

Doolin walked out in plain sight in the barn door and shot at Speed.

Dalton, peeking through a crack, said, "You missed him, Bill."

Doolin, with bullets whining past him, put one knee on the ground, rested his elbow on it, took aim,

fired, and Speed threw up his arms, his rifle dropped and he fell on his face, dead.

"You got him that time, Bill," said Dalton.

Bitter Creek, bleeding and weak, reeling like a man drunk, could hardly mount his horse, even with Rose helping him.

"Can you make it, old scout?" called Doolin.

"Sure! Never mind me; I'll get there," replied Bitter Creek.

Rose mounted the horse in front of him and he clung to her, with both arms around her.

Doolin and Dalton, like captains who are the last to leave a sinking ship, waited until the others had ridden out. Then all rode away together to a sheltered pasture in the hills. Bitter Creek and Rose were missed and Doolin and Dalton rode back to look for them. Bitter Creek had been too weak to stay on the horse, had fallen off and Rose after him. The horse wandered away and was lost. Rose dragged Bitter Creek into a tangle of turkey brush by the roadside and Doolin and Dalton found them there.

Doolin was kneeling beside Bitter Creek when the posse, led by Marshal Lafe Shadley, rode up and opened fire. Dalton's horse was shot dead and

he was wounded. He rolled over and over into the ditch and lay there, with his right arm helpless.

Doolin, broad-shouldered and tall, his hat swept away by a bullet, stood there bareheaded, straddling the body of Bitter Creek, one man facing five. At his first shot Shadley fell forward, his six-shooter still clutched in his hand. Doolin was almost out of ammunition. He ran to the body on the ground, stooped over it and snatched the six-shooter from the stiffening fingers and fronted the posse. He seemed bullet-proof.

At that moment Red Buck and Little Dick, having heard the shooting, rode back. Doolin, alone, kept the posse back, shooting with a gun in each hand and giving orders to his men. Bitter Creek was lifted up across the shoulders of Red Buck's horse and they rode off. Then Doolin and Little Dick helped Dalton up to a place behind Dick. Doolin was the last to mount. He took the Rose up behind him and rode as a rear guard, shooting back at the posse.

All the bandits except Arkansaw Tom escaped into the rough jungled brakes of the Cimarron. The woman carried bandages and medicines and food to them and nursed the wounded. Later on, the Rose,

who was really a comely and intelligent girl, was captured, together with Cattle Annie and Little Breeches, two other girl bandits, and the three were sent to a government reform school at Framingham, Massachusetts. While the Rose was there Bitter Creek, with Charley Pierce, was killed by two ranchmen who had been commissioned by Bill Tilghman to watch for them.

The Rose came out in due time, took her own name again, married an honest, prosperous man, has three children, is a member of a church and is much respected. I am the only person alive to-day who knows or even suspects that the quiet Christian matron was the Rose of the Cimarron, the most reckless woman bandit of Oklahoma, and that secret will go with me when I cross the last frontier.

CHAPTER XII

THIRTY NOTCHES IN HIS GUN

THE winter following the fight at Ingalls, Bill Tilghman and Neal Brown, in a covered wagon, with a camping outfit, went out after a ranchman charged with stealing cattle. With a foot of snow on the ground and snow still falling heavily, they lost their way and came to a dugout almost hidden under drifts. It was the middle of the afternoon, but almost as dark as night. Smoke was coming from the dugout chimney. Thinking that some harmless squatter lived there, Tilghman stopped to ask the way. He pushed the door open and entered.

It was a long room, half underground. At the far end a fire of black-jack logs blazed in a fireplace and a lone man with a rifle across his knees sat there. Tilghman walked the length of the room, spoke to the man and turned his back to the fire to warm himself. Glancing back, he saw there were rows of bunks along each side, curtained with burlap. The muzzle of a rifle or six-shooter protruded from the edge of each bunk, and each one was aimed at him. He could not see a hand, or a face, or any

part of a man, but he knew, instantly, that he had stumbled upon the hiding-place of an outlaw gang and that behind each gun was a pair of eyes watching him, with a bead held on him. He felt that they knew him. He was known by sight to every desperado in the territory, and he expected to be shot at any moment. But it would not do to show fear. He asked the ranchman in which direction to go to reach a certain place, and, after a few words, he said:

"I suppose I had better be moving on."

"I suppose you better," replied the surly ranchman.

Without another word Tilghman walked down the length of the room to the door, the muzzle of those guns following him as he walked; but he saw them only from the corner of his eye. He went out slowly, closing the door behind him, and mounted beside Brown.

"Do just what I say," he whispered to Brown. "Drive on, but go slow. There's a bunch of outlaws in that dugout, and I'll bet they're quarreling right now among themselves whether or not to come out and kill us. Don't look back. Keep right on the move."

Later Tilghman went back with a posse and arrested the old ranchman. Then he learned that it was Bill Doolin and seven of his gang who were in those bunks. Some were awake, some asleep, when he entered; but as soon as he spoke they all heard and recognized him, and quietly shoved the muzzles of their guns out, ready to shoot, but waiting for Doolin to give the word. When Tilghman went out the outlaws slid out of their bunks, and Red Buck, most desperate killer in the gang, with a rifle in his hand, sprang to the door. Doolin caught and held him.

"That's Bill Tilghman! Kill him!" cried Red Buck.

"No," Doolin commanded.

"What? You're going to let Tilghman get away? I'll kill him if you won't," and Red Buck flung the door open.

Tilghman was climbing over the front wheel of his wagon and Red Buck would have dropped him, but Doolin, moved by the chivalry of the frontier, that would not shoot even an enemy in the back, snatched the rifle out of his hands.

"Bill Tilghman is too good a man to be shot in the back," he said.

"I could have killed him while he stood by the fire. I left him to the last for you to down, Bill. I didn't want to butt in ahead of you, and now you want to let him get away," raged Red Buck.

"He's alone, you can't kill him that way," persisted Doolin, and he had his way.

Tilghman and Brown drove on, unmolested, and Doolin and his band rode in another direction.

A year later Tilghman came to me one night and said:

"I have a tip that Doolin is in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, taking the baths for rheumatism. I'm going over to get him."

"Who's going with you?" I asked.

"I'm going alone."

"Alone? No one man can take Bill Doolin. I'll go along and we'll take two or three more."

"No. If others go there'll be shooting and Doolin will get killed. He saved my life once and I won't go in on any plan to waylay and kill him. Besides, Bill has a good wife and little kid. I'll take him alone, and alive."

"You're signing your death-warrant," I told him, but he was determined.

We talked for a long time. He gave me detailed

directions about what to do if he was killed, and he went away alone.

In Eureka Springs Tilghman dressed as a preacher, in a black frock coat and derby hat. One day he entered the lobby of a hotel and saw Doolin in a corner, in a chair, tipped back against the wall. He was facing the door so he could see every one who entered, and was pretending to read a newspaper.

He saw Tilghman come in, but he had never seen Tilghman before in anything but a wide-brimmed cowboy hat, and he did not recognize him in the stiff derby hat and long coat.

Tilghman walked straight through the lobby, to a bathroom in the rear. There he examined his six-shooter, stepped out quickly, shoved its muzzle against Doolin's stomach and said, "Put 'em up, Bill."

Doolin leaped to his feet and reached for his revolver in a holster under his left arm. Tilghman grabbed for his wrist, but caught Doolin's coat cuff instead. They wrestled about the lobby, Doolin struggling to get his right hand in under his coat; Tilghman clinging to his sleeve, fighting with all his might.

"Don't make me kill you, Bill!" coaxed Tilghman.

Doolin growled and tried harder to reach his gun. As they wrestled Tilghman felt Doolin's coat sleeve beginning to rip, and each second Doolin's hand was getting closer to the gun under his left arm. Throughout the scuffle Tilghman held his six-shooter against Doolin's stomach. His thumb was on the hammer and he could have killed his man any instant. The sleeve tore a little more and Doolin's hand edged closer to his left armpit.

"Don't force me to kill you, Bill! I remember what you did for me at the dugout," urged Tilghman.

Doolin knew that he would be hanged if captured, and he gave a mighty wrench; the sleeve ripped.

"Good-by, Bill!" panted Tilghman, and Doolin, looking into his eyes, saw there what made him give up.

"All right, you win," he said.

Tilghman took the weapon from under Doolin's arm. It was the same six-shooter Doolin had snatched from the hand of Lafe Shadley after he killed him. "It's an unlucky gun; take it and keep it," said Doolin.

Tilghman took Doolin to his room and was packing his belongings in a bag when the outlaw said, "Tilghman, put that cup in, will you?"

It was a little red tin cup with the word "Baby" painted on it.

"Thinking of your wife and baby, hey?" Tilghman asked.

"They're all I've got," replied Doolin. "I bought that cup for the little kid."

"I'll see that the baby gets it," Tilghman told him. Then laying his hand on the outlaw's shoulder, he went on: "I know your wife's father, a preacher in Lawton. I know how you swam the river and risked your life to see her when you were courting her, for I was on your trail then and I came pretty close to getting you. Now if you'll promise that you won't try to get away, I'll take you to Guthrie without handcuffing you."

Doolin put out his hand and Tilghman grasped it.

They sat together in the train all that night on the way to Guthrie and no one knew they were marshal and captive. Tilghman told me that Doolin was a most interesting talker and that he never spent a more pleasant night.

Five thousand people gathered at the depot in Guthrie to see the outlaw and the man who had taken him alive. The sheriff and his deputies and the whole police force could not clear a way to the jail until hundreds had shaken hands with Doolin.

A handsome woman said to him, "Why, you don't look so terrible, Mr. Doolin! I believe I could have captured you myself."

"You could," the outlaw assured her.

Doolin's gift as a talker and story-teller got him out of jail before he was tried. The guards, charmed by his gift of gab, used to come to the bars to listen to him. One Sunday Bill lured a guard close to those bars, and while the guard was convulsed with laughter at a funny story, his head thrown back, Bill reached through the bars and took his six-shooter. He forced the guard to open the door, took his keys, locked him up, unlocked the doors for every prisoner, turned them into the street and walked out with them.

A young man and his girl were driving past in a buggy. Bill put them out, got in himself, drove away and disappeared.

Ever since their marriage Doolin's wife had been urging him to go to some far-off place and begin

life over again. After this jail delivery Doolin promised her that he would engage in just one more bank robbery and if successful follow her advice. Calling his gang together, they robbed a bank in Missouri which netted him several thousand dollars; he bade farewell to his men and returned to his wife and baby in a little cabin near Quay.

Then loading their household goods into a covered wagon, with a bed in it for the wife and baby, one midnight he started on the trail to a new life.

United States marshals had learned about the lonely cabin in time to get there at that very same midnight. Heck Thomas was in charge. It was a night of bright moonlight. As the marshals crept up through the grass and stunted willows they were surprised to see the covered wagon at the cabin door with a team hitched to it, and Doolin's horse tied to the front wheel. The original plan was to get close and lie in wait, even if all night, until Doolin came out, and then Heck Thomas was to challenge him, and if he did not put up his hands, was to shoot him.

Doolin and his wife, with the baby asleep in her arms, came out. They were both suspicious. They always were. Doolin kissed them both and helped

them into the wagon. She put the baby on the bed and took up the reins.

"Drive down and I will walk on ahead until we cross the creek; there may be some one in the bushes," he advised her.

Doolin never walked anywhere without his rifle in the hollow of his left arm, his right hand closed around the stock, his thumb on the hammer, his finger on the trigger. He held it that way as he came down the path leading the horse by the tips of the bridle reins. The marshals could see him peering this way and that from under the brim of his slouch hat.

With a double-barreled shotgun, which Bill Tilghman had loaded with twenty-one buckshot, Heck Thomas stepped out from a clump of willows into the moonlight and commanded, "Hands up!"

Doolin swung his rifle forward. Thomas had an old eight-bore shotgun, too long in the breech to handle quickly, and before he could shoot, Doolin fired, but missed. Then Thomas fired both barrels and Doolin fell. Mrs. Doolin, screaming, ran and fell upon the body of her husband. In the wagon the marshals found the little red tin cup with the word "Baby" painted on it.

In my collection of firearms I have the rifle Doolin was carrying when he was killed. On the thin upper edge of the stock are twenty-seven notches cut close together with a knife. In the barrel are filed three more notches. With that rifle Doolin had killed thirty men.

CHAPTER XIII

WIPING OUT THE DOOLIN GANG

THE six-shooter ended the lives of nine-tenths of all the outlaws of the Wild West.

The most of them were fear-proof and conscience-proof, of iron nerve, physically tough, long riders who could go for days at a time in the saddle, good trackers and trailers, handy with six-shooter and rifle, but it is true, as Bill Tilghman said to President Roosevelt, that the man of the law, with right on his side, generally has the best of it in a gun fight with a fellow who is in the wrong.

A man might have a long streak of luck at the banditry game, and seem to be winning, but the percentage was against him, and the shadow of the final disaster was always hanging over him. He might plan and scheme, but there was this psychology about it, that he was always in the wrong, and in the long run he was always outwitted, outridden and outshot by the United States marshals, who had every quality of courage and skill and physical stamina that he possessed, and, besides, were always in the right. And the supply of marshals never dim-

inished. If an outlaw gang killed one marshal, or two or three, others stepped into their places, and the fight went on.

Of the twenty men who at one time or another were members of the Bill Doolin gang eighteen were shot down and died with their boots on.

While the Doolin gang was terrorizing Oklahoma the business men of that new country petitioned the government to appoint a man who would put an end to the reign of banditry, and the government selected E. D. Nix as United States marshal.

He selected experienced gunmen of the border as his field marshals. As previously stated, the leaders were Bill Tilghman, Chris Madsen and Heck Thomas, who became known as the "Three Guardsmen" among the field marshals.

I have told how all but two members of the Dalton gang were wiped out in the Coffeyville raid; and how Bill Doolin, one of the two survivors, organized a bandit gang, and of the fight between this band and marshals at Ingalls, in which the field marshals, Lafe Shadley, Tom Houston and Dick Speed, were killed. After that battle Marshal Nix sent the Three Guardsmen after Doolin and his

band. I have told how Tilghman captured Doolin, of his escape and how Heck Thomas killed him.

After the death of Doolin, Tulsa Jack took command of the band. They robbed a train at Dover and Chris Madsen, one of the Three Guardsmen, organized a posse in a hurry and started after them. Madsen's life has been one long adventure. He has had so many narrow escapes from death it would take a whole book to tell of them. He was in the Danish army, then enlisted in the Foreign Legion of France and served in Algiers; fought under Louis Napoleon in the Franco-Prussian War, came to America, enlisted in the United States Army and fought through Indian campaigns in the West, Southwest and Northwest. He was chief of scouts in wars against the Sioux, Cheyennes and Nez Perces Indians and was an army scout in campaigns against the Bannocks and Utes in Wyoming and Colorado.

One of Madsen's narrow escapes came when he was a scout for General Custer. Madsen was the crack carbine shot of Custer's regiment, and a few days before the Custer massacre Madsen was assigned to lead a party of Indian hunters to get meat for the regiment. He was out on that hunt when

Custer and his men were massacred by the Indians. He returned to the scene of the battle the night after it occurred and slept among the dead on the field.

When Oklahoma was opened to white settlement in 1889 Madsen made the run and settled on a homestead, but a year later he was appointed United States field marshal and served for years.

When Marshal Nix sent Madsen after Tulsa Jack and his men he said to him:

"Don't take any chances to bring them in alive; there isn't one of them that won't fight as long as he can pull a trigger, so shoot on sight."

Madsen came in sight of Tulsa Jack and his men at a crossing of the Cimarron River. For three hours the outlaws ran and dodged and fought among the sand-hills and in and out of patches of bushes and brambles, and Madsen kept closely after them, dodging too from one shelter to another. Madsen shot Tulsa Jack from his horse and shot the horse from under Charlie Pierce. Pierce caught and mounted Tulsa Jack's horse and went on. Madsen shot that horse down. Then Pierce, wounded and scarcely able to walk, was lifted up behind Red Buck, and they and Bitter Creek and Little Bill escaped. On the long ride to get away they met a

Photos from Mr. Sutton's Collection

ROSE OF THE CIMARRON

ARKANSAW TOM

Photos from Mr. Sutton's Collection

Bob Dalton, 1889

Emmett Dalton, 1910

Members of the "Dalton Boys" gang of outlaws

circuit-riding preacher on horseback and Red Buck calmly killed him and took his horse for Charlie Pierce to ride.

Bill Tilghman joined Madsen in chase of the gang. They learned that, eventually, the outlaws would go to a lonesome cabin in the hills for shelter, and they set two ranchmen to watch and notify them if the bandits came there. Charlie Pierce and Bitter Creek rode up to the cabin one night and the ranchmen, lying in ambush, killed them both.

Red Buck was trailed to a dugout. The marshals surrounded it and hailed him:

"Throw your guns and come out, hands up."

"Hands up, hell! When I do come I'll come a smokin'," answered Red Buck.

And he came out in just that way, with a six-shooter in each hand, "blazing fire and spitting lead" as one of the marshals said afterward. He did not get far beyond the door.

Bill Dalton, a member of the original Doolin gang, had gone into hiding with his wife in a ranch house near Ardmore. He was a brother of the Daltons wiped out in the Coffeyville raid. Marshal Loss Hart went after Dalton, who was in an up-stairs room of the ranch house, and when he saw Hart

coming he leaped from a rear window. Just then Hart turned the corner of the house. Dalton was already in the air when Hart saw him, but Hart drew his six-shooter and put a bullet through the body of Dalton, and he was dead when he hit the ground. That was talked about among gunmen in Oklahoma as a good pot shot with a six-shooter.

The men of the original Doolin gang were nearly all wiped off the map, and Dick West, known as Little Dick, one of the few survivors of it, organized a new gang which became known as the Jennings Gang. In it were two pairs of brothers: Al and Frank Jennings and Morris and Pat O'Malley. After a few robberies Little Dick left them. Marshal Bud Ledbetter and a posse chased the Jennings gang into a house of the Spike S ranch and a battle, famous on the frontier, took place. The bandits escaped but were afterward captured.

Marshals Bill Tilghman and Heck Thomas heard that Little Dick had "holed up" for the winter in a ranch house on Turkey Creek. They found him currying a horse behind a barn. They turned a corner of the barn suddenly and gave him the old familiar challenge:

"Hands up!"

Little Dick was one of the few gunmen of the West who had the gift of drawing and firing two six-shooters at once with equal quickness and accuracy. He was as quick and sure with his left hand as with his right, and, although the two marshals knew this, and knew that he would do that very thing when they called to him, yet they would not shoot him down without due warning.

When Little Dick heard that call, which meant surrender or death, he dropped the curry comb and pulled a six-shooter with each hand. Heck Thomas killed him before he could shoot.

"That curry comb saved our lives," Thomas said afterward. "If Little Dick's hands had both been free he would have had his guns out first, but in that fraction of time required for him to drop the curry comb I got my six-gun to work first."

Heck Thomas had been a soldier in the Confederate Army. He settled in Texas and was an express messenger on a railroad there when Sam Bass and his outlaw gang flagged the train to a stand still and climbed into Heck's car. When the first shots were fired Heck knew what was coming and he stuffed a package of twenty-two thousand dollars into a cold stove, and when the outlaws demanded the

money he handed them a package and pretended to be scared and said:

"There's twenty-two thousand dollars in that package; take it and spare my life."

Sam Bass took it and leaped from the car and the train went on. When Bass opened it and found it to be only a novel that some one had sent by express he swore that he would kill Thomas.

"All right," said Heck. "If Sam Bass is going to kill me I'd better hurry up and beat him to it." And he resigned and was appointed a United States deputy marshal in Texas and helped wipe out Sam Bass and his gang. Then he was transferred to the Indian Territory, and Marshal Nix appointed him one of the Three Guardsmen.

Bill Tilghman, when he was United States field marshal, came to me one day in Oklahoma City and asked me to go with him to the Sac and Fox Indian country on the trail of Little Bill. I was too busy to go.

"Well," said Tilghman, "I'm going after him, and I'm not coming back without him."

Three weeks later Tilghman came to see me again. I saw that his left arm was in a sling and I remarked:

"It looks like you found your man, Bill."

"Yes," he answered, "I found him."

"Where is he?"

"He's chained to the safe over here at the North Side Hotel. I'm going to take him on the next train to the Federal jail in Guthrie."

I went with Tilghman to see his prisoner. One end of a trace chain was locked around his neck. The other end was padlocked around the big safe in the office of the hotel. Little Bill had been shot through the chest and was suffering. He sat hunched down in a chair, breathing heavily.

"Better have a doctor look him over, hadn't you, Bill?" I asked.

"No, not till I land him in jail. He's tough as bull's hide," replied Tilghman.

The outlaw was an undersized man, with a small head and features, and an ugly look in his face that reminded me of a caged rat. His eyes were small and were too close together; they both seemed to come out of one hole, as a skunk's eyes do. Although small in stature he was one of the worst outlaws of early Oklahoma. He had been graduated from a college, chose to be a cowboy, and from that he graduated into Bill Doolin's outlaw gang. He was a

scout for Doolin, would go into a town and select a bank to be robbed, plan each detail of it, map the attack and get-away, as an army general would plan a military campaign.

Little Bill spent all his spare time practising with his six-shooter. Even as he rode on horseback he would practise, shooting at trees, telegraph poles, fence posts, birds, rabbits or any object that offered a good target. Bill Doolin told me that Little Bill was the best marksman with a six-shooter he had ever known, and Doolin was an expert shot, himself.

"I saw Little Bill ride along at a moderate lope, with the bridle rein in his teeth and a six-shooter in each hand, and he'd shoot with his right hand and at a fence post on one side of the road, and then shoot with the left hand at a post on the other side, and so he'd shoot, back and forth, first to the right and then to the left, the shots coming faster than you could count the reports, till he'd fired ten shots, and from five to eight of those bullets would reach the mark. That's some shootin', you tell 'em," said Bill Doolin.

The particular crime for which Tilghman had trailed and captured Little Bill was done in Woodward. Little Bill and Bitter Creek had ridden into

that town at night and, at the point of their six-shooters, took the Wells-Fargo express agent from his home, marched him down the street to the express office, forced him to open the safe and hand them sixty-five hundred dollars, and then rode away. They divided the money and separated.

Tilghman got word that Little Bill had ridden, alone, into the Sac and Fox Indian country. Tilghman, alone, started on his trail. That section had not then been opened to settlement. It had a few scattered Indians and white squatters living like rabbits, in dugouts. One could ride for miles and miles over the prairie and not see a human habitation. The grass and weeds on the uplands were often four feet high, and the creek bottoms were heavily jungled with trees and brush.

Into this wilderness went Little Bill, to hide, and after him went Bill Tilghman, as persistent on a trail as a trained bloodhound. Once he got the scent of a track he seldom lost it, and would follow it as long as there was a sign to go by. Little Bill was on horseback, and so was Tilghman. The outlaw was armed with a repeating rifle and two six-shooters. Tilghman was armed in exactly the same way. Both had enough hard tack and bacon in their saddle-

bags to last for two or three weeks, and had saddle blankets for sleeping on the ground.

The second day of the chase Little Bill learned that Tilghman was trailing him. He knew Tilghman, and he realized that he must use all his cunning to escape capture or death. Each day Tilghman would learn, from some Indian or squatter, that the outlaw was just a day ahead of him, but he never got sight of him. Little Bill would ride furiously across the open country, he would double on his trail, he would plunge into the hill country and try to blot out his trail in the jungles of the watercourses, but Tilghman was never more than a day behind.

So it went for three weeks, and then Tilghman went into camp one night on the open prairie. Next morning, just at daybreak, he opened his eyes and saw the form of a horse on the horizon line, like a silhouette in black against the whitish dawn in the sky. The horse was saddled, and Tilghman felt certain it was Little Bill's mount. Tilghman wormed his way on his stomach through the grass until he was within good shooting distance, then he eased his head up slowly and saw Little Bill, sound asleep. He had picketed his horse and then lain down with his

rifle in the hollow of his left arm; but in his sleep he had rolled away from it, and he lay flat upon his back, six feet from his rifle.

Tilghman arose slowly. He could have shot the outlaw where he was, asleep, but he did not even think of doing that. The code of the six-shooter and the rifle, observed by almost every one on the plains, would not permit him to shoot, even an outlaw, without giving him warning and a chance. He put his rifle to his shoulder, aimed at the sleeping man and shouted loudly:

"Hands up!"

Tilghman told me the story of what happened, in this way:

"Did you ever see a dog creep stealthily up on a cat asleep in the sun, and suddenly bark, and that cat would spring up in the air, with its back arched and spitting fire? That's just the way Little Bill acted. When I shouted he went up into the air as if he had been thrown from a spring-board, and as he went he pulled a six-shooter in each hand, and he shot at me before he hit the ground. I never saw a man draw and shoot so quickly before. I never dreamed it could be done by any man. Both his guns spit bullets at me before I could pull the trigger,

and one of his bullets hit me in the left shoulder. But, before my arm dropped I shot and my bullet went through him, grazing his lung. There we were, out on the prairie, twenty miles from a house. I bound up his wound and my own as well as I could, disarmed him, put him on his horse, and we rode nearly fifty miles to the railroad before we could get medical treatment, and here we are."

Little Bill went to the penitentiary for twenty-one years, but he had been there only a year or so when he sent word to Tilghman that he was dying and wanted to see him. Tilghman went and the outlaw pleaded with him:

"I've never recovered from that wound in my lung, Mr. Tilghman. I don't want to die in the penitentiary. That would be worse than dying with my boots on. I have a mother and sister who don't know where I am, or that I was ever an outlaw. Let me go and die in the old home, with them to nurse me and bury me."

Through the influence of Tilghman the outlaw was pardoned and restored to his mother, and he died shortly afterward. He was one of the two members of the Doolin gang who died with their boots off.

CHAPTER XIV

THE OUTLAW QUEEN

I NEVER have known for a certainty the answer to why the western gunman cut or filed a notch on his revolver or rifle for each man he killed. I once saw Luke Short adding a notch to the stock of his six-shooter with a barlow knife as we were camped on the Cimarron the day after a scrap with an outlaw, and I asked him why.

Short looked puzzled. "When you come right down to it, I don't know," he admitted. "It's kind of a habit, I guess."

When the frontier had tamed and Bat Masterson had joined Alfred Henry Lewis on a newspaper in New York City, I visited him, told him I was making a collection of firearms of historic interest and asked for one of his six-shooters. He gave me one, and pointing to the notches in its gutta-percha stock, said, "It has twenty-two credits."

"You killed twenty-two men with this gun, Bat?" I asked.

"And I didn't count greasers or Indians," was his answer.

But he did not know the origin of the custom. "I suppose it was because every one did it," he hazarded, "but when I think of it, all of them didn't do it. There never was a notch in Bill Tilghman's gun. He preferred to forget."

I saw Bat Masterson tame a wild man by hitting him on the head with this six-shooter instead of killing him. This was called "buffaloing" a man. If you wanted to beat him into submission without killing him you "buffaloed" him. Generally one blow on the head with a heavy six-shooter was enough to knock him out.

This was never done in the manner frequently described in stories of the West and shown often in moving pictures, in which the six-shooter is grasped by the muzzle end of the barrel and the butt is used as a hammer or club. If a man held his six-shooter in that way, by the barrel, he would simply be inviting his opponent to kill him, for, if the other man should seize the butt and pull the trigger it would be all up with the owner of the gun.

In clubbing a man with a six-shooter you took a firm grasp of the stock and brought the barrel down on his head. One blow was generally enough, for a blow on the head with the heavy six- or eight-inch

barrel of a six-shooter was like hitting a man with a lead pipe.

I have seen it done many a time. In Oklahoma City I saw a half-breed Indian who was drunk, stagger up against Mart Drew, a quiet rancher. Mart shoved the fellow off and the Indian pulled a Mexican stiletto from his sleeve. Mart did not want to kill him, so he drew his six-shooter and tapped him once on the head with the barrel, and he dropped as if he had been hit with a pile driver.

Hereafter, when you see a man in a movie grab his six-shooter by the barrel and use its butt as a club you can be sure he is a phony gunman whose creator never knew the Old West.

The most satisfactory explanation I ever heard of why so many gunmen cut notches in their weapons came from Henry Starr, the bandit. "A skilled workman is proud of his tools," Starr suggested. "Watch a barber honing and fondling his favorite razor. It's the best razor in seven states, if you believe him, and he'll brag about how many thousand faces it has shaved, the wonderful steel in its blade and how it holds its edge. Or listen to a conductor or engineer bragging about his watch that never varies the hundredth part of a second; or a carpenter

talking about that saw he has had for nineteen years.

"Well, a six-shooter is the working tool of the outlaw and the fellows who chase him, and a darned sight more important to him than the razor to the barber or the watch to the engineer, for his life hangs on it. A good six-shooter costs about forty dollars, and if you want to go in for ivory, stag horn, silver or gold mountings, you can go up a lot higher. A fellow gets a new gun, gets the hang of it, learns to love it. When he gets into a hole and it downs the other fellow he's proud of it. He gives it a notch for remembrance. By the time there are six or eight notches on the stock he is a killer. He's liable to be case-hardened by then and drop a man just to add another notch. Maybe he's jealous of somebody that's got fourteen notches on his shooting iron. It gets to be a kind of contest, like a fellow getting a lot of medals.

"I had a fellow with me, known as the 'Slim Kid,'" continued Starr. "He was a wicked brute; had a six-gun he called 'Old Rackatee'; had eight or ten notches on it; used to fondle and pet that gun like it was a baby, and talk to it. He'd get it out, when we were sitting around the camp-fire, and rub

it with a rag, blow his breath on its metal parts and polish them. He had a mania for adding more notches to it. I had to hold him down. Every time we'd go in to hoist a bank he'd want to kill some one so he could put another notch on his gun.

"There's no use in downing a man just to add one more to your collection of notches, you know. It's always best to pull a hold-up without bloodshed. There's less afterclap. If you just get a bank's money people are apt to say:

" 'I didn't lose any money, and I haven't lost any bank robbers; let the banker go out after the bandits.' But, if you kill some one, the whole town r'ars up on its hind legs and hikes out on your trail.

"I had to get rid of the Slim Kid, and afterward he met a perfectly harmless man on horseback in the road and took his horse, and, because the man objected, Slim killed him. He got another notch, all right, but it was his last. They caught him and old Maledon hung him down in Fort Smith. His hankering after notches brought his downfall, and he became only Notch No. 59 in Hangman Maledon's gallows in Fort Smith."

In my collection of guns that have made history on the border is the forty-four caliber saddle rifle

carried by Belle Starr through all her years of lawlessness on the frontier. On one side of its walnut stock it has the name "Belle Starr," the letters formed of the small heads of brass tacks driven into the wood. On the other side of the stock is a bell and star formed of the same kind of brass tacks. Those designs and the name were put upon the rifle by the woman bandit, when she bought the rifle, early in her career.

Seven notches are cut into an edge of the walnut stock. Those were put there, too, by Belle Starr, one for each of the seven men she killed with this rifle.

I saw Belle Starr only once. That was when I was a lad in Fort Dodge, Kansas. Her fame then as the "Outlaw Queen" had spread up and down the border and stories were told about her in every cow camp and frontier town. She came of a good family in Carthage, Missouri, but, when yet a girl, she married Jim Reed, an outlaw who took her to live among outlaws in Indian Territory. Reed killed a man and was himself killed, and his widow, Belle, took up with Sam Starr, another outlaw.

In the Creek Nation lived a rich Indian, Watt Grayson, who had thirty thousand dollars in gold hidden in his house. One night three bandits visited

him and strung him up seven times by his neck, but he would not tell where the money was hidden. Then they put the rope around the neck of his wife and lifted her clear of the floor. Grayson had withstood the physical torture of being almost strangled to death seven times, but when he heard the groans of his squaw he weakened and told where the money could be found.

The stories along the border were that Belle Starr, dressed as a man, was one of the three bandits who got Grayson's thirty thousand dollars. Whether that is true or not I do not know, but it is true that shortly afterward she blossomed out with a string of racing horses and her entries were in all the big race meets throughout Texas. She lost her money and her horses, was arrested for horse stealing in Texas, but got out of it and returned to Indian Territory and to outlawry again. She threw in with an outlaw known as Blue Duck. I never heard of any other name for him.

She and Blue Duck, mounted on superb horses, rode into Fort Dodge one day and put up at Mrs. Kelley's boarding house. There I saw them. She was not what one would call a good-looking woman. She was rather plain, but she had remarkable blue eyes,

the kind that bore into you, and she was quick in her movements. I knew, the minute I saw her, that she was a woman of strong will and determination, a woman of nerve.

Speaking of blue eyes, I never knew a gunman worthy of the name who had black or brown eyes or hair. All were blonds, with blue or gray eyes. I have told of Wild Bill's eyes and blond hair and of how Quantrell, the killer, was known as "the blond Apollo of the prairies." Bill Tilghman, Bat Masterson, Billy the Kid, Bill McDonald, the Texas Ranger, Wyatt Earp, Luke Short and many more I have known were all blonds. It is a strange thing that I have often wondered about.

In those days Dodge was the "end of steel" on the new Santa Fé railroad. It was the jumping-off place. It was a nest of saloons, gambling places, dance-halls, gamblers, cowboys, plainsmen, outlaws and so on, and even Belle Starr was a curiosity for only a day.

She and Blue Duck were there only a few days when he borrowed two thousand dollars from her and lost it bucking a faro game. When he returned to the boarding house that night and told her where the money had gone she paid their bills at Mrs. Kel-

ley's, saddled their horses and she and Blue Duck rode down in front of the gambling house in which he had lost the two thousand dollars. Blue Duck was left outside to hold the horses and Belle went upstairs to the gambling hall, which was over a saloon, and with a six-shooter she held up the place and scooped up seven thousand dollars from the gaming tables and backed out. She and Blue Duck galloped away with the money and no one went after them. In the gambling hall when she held it up were all sorts of armed men, gamblers, gunmen, killers, but when they saw a woman outlaw at work they were too astonished to move.

"We wuz all jest so plum flabbergasted we couldn't move a finger," one of them said afterward.

Several years afterward, when she was the wife of Sam Starr, Blue Duck was charged with murder and was arrested by Frank E. Cochran, who for forty years was one of the noted United States marshals in Indian Territory. I lived next door to Cochran for several years and saw him bring in five outlaws at once, in a spring wagon, and he had them all shackled together with trace chains. Cochran helped capture the Rufus Buck gang of five outlaws who were hanged in a row by Maledon in Fort

Smith. In a single-handed battle with five bank bandits in Bristow, in the Creek Nation, Cochran was shot six times through the body and lived.

Cochran told me that when he captured Blue Duck he took his six-shooter from him and it was literally covered with notches. Blue Duck begged to be allowed to keep it. He called it his "smoke wagon." He said:

"I have worked with that smoke wagon for twenty years. It has saved my life a dozen times. Throw the cartridges out and let me keep it."

Blue Duck was convicted, in Judge Parker's court in Fort Smith, and Parker sentenced him to die; but Belle Starr came to his rescue. She hired the best lawyers in the country and had his death sentence commuted to life imprisonment, and after he had spent one year in prison she had him pardoned.

Later, Belle and her husband, Sam Starr, were convicted in Judge Parker's court and spent a year in prison. Sam was killed by a posse soon after they were released. Then Belle made up her mind to settle down. She took a claim of one thousand acres on Canadian River in the Cherokee country, built three cottages and lived there.

Belle Starr was murdered by Edgar Watson, an outlaw who was in love with her. She repelled him, and at a dance one night she refused to dance with him. He went out and lay in wait along a lonely road she would travel on her way to her home. As she rode past on her horse, "Venus," Watson shot her in the back. She fell from her horse and Watson ran out and shot her again as she lay on the ground. She died, with her boots on.

Watson was killed later by an avenger.

Belle Starr was killed at a spot where the road dipped down to a ford in a little creek. On the opposite side of the creek, hidden in a thicket, James Boles, United States field marshal, was waiting for her to come along. He had been detailed by Marshal Tine Hughes to bring her in to answer for a robbery. When Boles heard the shooting he stepped out into the road and just then Belle Starr's horse crossed the ford and came up to him. He caught the horse and led it back to where Belle's body lay in the road. Boles took the rifle and its leather holster from her saddle and kept them. Years later, after he had been shot many times while on duty, and was broken in health and crippled and poor, he came to visit me in Oklahoma City and I got him a

job as city jailer under Mayor Henry M. Scales. As a token of his appreciation Boles gave me Belle Starr's rifle and its holster. It is one of the best rifles I ever handled.

Belle Starr is buried behind the cottages she built at Younger's Bend on the Canadian River.

Belle had one daughter, Pearl, who died several years ago. Pearl's daughter, granddaughter of the famous woman bandit—a good woman and wife of a good man—came to see me not long ago and for an hour she sat in my home and fondled the rifle carried for so many years by her grandmother. She said to me:

"I do not like those notches in the stock of this rifle."

"Well," I said to her. "You can comfort yourself with one fact. Your grandmother was not a wilful murderer. Marshal Cochran, who arrested her, told me that she said to him: 'I never killed unless I was compelled to.' I believe that is true."

CHAPTER XV

THE ILL-STARRED STARR

HENRY STARR was among the first and he was the last of the old-time train- and bank-robbing outlaws of Indian Territory. He worked at the bandit trade off and on for thirty-five years, and he was killed February 19, 1921, while robbing a bank at Harrison, Arkansas. His mother was part Cherokee, his father of Scotch-Irish stock. He was educated in an Indian school, and with a natural taste for reading, had spent most of his many prison terms with his nose in a book. While there was enough of the Indian in him to make him taciturn, he would talk hours at a time in his low-pitched, even voice with those he liked, and then he was one of the most companionable men I ever knew.

He did not use liquor, tobacco, tea or coffee. His eyes were black as eyes ever were, his hair as black as a crow's wing, and straight, and his skin had just a tinge of Indian swartness. A slight man, he had the physique of an athlete, moved with an aboriginal grace, could dog-trot half a day, had the Indian instinct for finding his way, and could live on roots,

berries and nuts and sleep on the ground for months at a time, if need be.

Starr was a born leader of men, and the various gangs he recruited and headed were among the most dare-devil the Southwest ever knew.

The United States marshals, whose business was to run down outlaws, called Starr "The Bear Cat," because they knew he was absolutely without fear, that he was stealthy and cunning as a bear, that he was swift of foot and sure of aim, and if cornered would fight like a wildcat and never give up, no matter what odds were against him, and many an official with a reputation as a man-catcher, was careful to avoid Starr.

To me the most striking trait about him was his even, unexcitable poise. Men who were with him when a whole town was shooting at him, his men falling around him, his clothing pierced by bullets, have told me he was as calm then as when lying under a tree on a summer afternoon, reading some of the classics, a supply of which he always carried in his saddle-bags.

The owner of a large Oklahoma ranch, a man of high respectability, was a warm personal friend of Starr. He said to me: "Starr is a curious mixture

of good and bad. I know he is a bandit, but I can not help liking him. There has always been a conflict in my mind as to whether I should forbid him coming to my home, or still keep him as a friend, but Starr has always won. He would come quietly, generally bringing books with him, and spend hours at a time curled up in a window-seat or in a chair, reading.

But nearly always after his departure the newspapers soon would be telling of a bank somewhere raided by a gang led by a swarthy man who spoke courteously to the bank officials, even as he held them under the spell of his six-shooters and swept their money into his sack. I urged him many times to reform and he promised, and I know he tried, and I always felt that his better nature would get the upper hand, finally, but there was some sinister twist to his nature that lured him into banditry, and he could not fight it down."

Starr assured this cattleman that if he were only away from his Oklahoma reputation he believed he could go straight. Soon thereafter the cattleman was appointed to a position in St. Louis, in connection with the livestock industry there. He sent for Starr, installed him, under an assumed name, in a

room adjoining his at the Planter's Hotel, bought him fine raiment, including a dress suit and a white sombrero that cost seventy-five dollars, and Starr, posing as a cattleman from the Southwest, went into society and really cut a swath for several months. The plan was for Starr to form influential connections that would help him to drop into a good position.

One evening Starr put on his dress suit and went to a function in Webster Groves, a suburb. Next morning at breakfast the cattleman asked how he had enjoyed himself at the party. Starr's face lighted up with enthusiasm.

"Say, I saw the swellest bank out there, right on a corner, and I'll bet that it's lousy with money! It——"

"Hold on! Hold on there!" interrupted his friend.

"I couldn't help noticing how easy it would be to hoist that bank, that's all," said Starr.

The cattleman thought no more about it, but three weeks later that bank was held up in true border style, and Starr disappeared the same day.

At different times Starr told me the real inner workings of his life, the moods, the psychology, the

aims and desires that led him to be an outlaw and kept him at it.

When I was in the banking business in Oklahoma City, Starr walked into my private office one day. I had known him for years and had talked with him in the jail at Fort Smith when he was under sentence to be hanged. Later I had been with posses in pursuit of him. Then I had met him when he came out of prison, repentant and trying to reform.

I knew there was a price on his head when he came into my office, and I asked, "Henry, what are you doing here?"

"Just came to visit you a little while."

"You know there is a big reward out for you?"

"Yes," he answered in his easy way, "I know that."

"Aren't you afraid to come in here and see me with that reward hanging over you?"

"If you had a marshal's badge hanging on to you I'd steer clear of you, but this is safer for me than the street."

"I could use two or three thousand dollars just now."

"Go to it," he laughed; and then, in a more seri-

ous tone—"I am here as your guest, not as an outlaw. You can't do it."

His picture and notice of the reward were posted at every crossroads, but he had driven in a car from Clovis, New Mexico, stopping at hotels on the way, and was going on to Tulsa to see his wife and little boy, Roosevelt. I asked him then why he did not quit and get into some honest business, and offered to help him.

"It's too late now," he said. "I could never wipe the slate clean. The law has too many grudges to settle with me."

"Why didn't you quit it long ago? You're a sensible man; you know it doesn't pay."

"It's the chance of making a big stake," he answered. "There's always the chance that I'll make a haul that will make me rich. But I never make that big haul. We don't get the amounts people think we do. After I've divided with my men I've never had more than a few thousand dollars from any robbery, and generally I get only a few hundred. Then, to be honest, I must admit that there's the lure of the life in the open, the rides at night, the spice of danger, the mastery over men, the pride of being able to hold a mob at bay—it tingles in my

veins. I love it. It is wild adventure. I feel as I imagine the old buccaneers felt when they roved the seas with the black flag at the mast head. I like the homage the wild men of the wilderness pay me, to have them defer to me and point me out as Henry Starr, the outlaw. It's got into my blood."

"You'll come to a fearful finish some day; they'll corner you and tear the flesh from your bones with bullets," I told him.

"I know it, but what of it? It will be over in a flash and I won't feel it."

Starr differed from most bandits I have known in that he had an aversion to killing. So far as I know, he slew only one, Floyd Wilson, and that was in the strangest duel I ever heard of. It occurred away back when Judge Parker's court held sway in Fort Smith. Starr, then a boy of eighteen, had robbed a railway station and several stores; a reward was posted for his capture, and Wilson, a former deputy marshal, went to get him. He met Starr on the prairie and called to him to surrender. Both were on horseback. Both dismounted and they faced each other, each with a six-shooter in his hand. Telling me about it afterward, Starr said:

"I was only a boy, but one thing was fixed in my

mind, and that was that I was not afraid of anything that walked on two feet. I knew that no man was a better shot than I. I had already had my nerve tested and knew the farther I went into danger the cooler I got, and I knew that no man could take me alive if I saw him first. So when Wilson called on me to surrender I called back, 'You can't take me, Wilson; go away!'

" 'Throw away that gun and put up your hands or I'll kill you,' he replied. He was edging closer all the time, so I drew down on him and ordered him to halt. I didn't want to kill him. He probably thought that as I was only a kid I was afraid of him, and he shouted, 'Now, I'm going to kill you.'

" 'All right,' I told him. 'I'll lower my gun and give you the chance to shoot first, and you better make a clean job of it. If I kill you it will be in self-defense. Shoot!'

"Wilson took cool aim at me, fired, and the ball sang past my ear. Then I put a bullet through his heart, mounted my horse and rode away."

Starr was a daylight bank robber. He robbed scores of banks in broad daylight, often alone, sometimes with only one companion, many times as leader of a gang. I asked him once if it was not

more dangerous to rob in the daytime, when the whole town could see him at it, and see to shoot at him and chase him, than at night.

"That's where you're wrong," he explained, in his unemotional way of talking. "In the first place, to rob at night you must understand the use of nitroglycerin for opening the safe, and that's a messy business and too much like burglary and night prowling, and it's far more dangerous than daylight robbery. In the dark any coward can hide behind a post and shoot, but in daylight it is a brave man that will come out in the open and swap shots with a bandit.

"In the majority of daylight raids where the bandits were shot down, the townsfolk had been tipped off and were lying in wait. It is essential that the raid be a complete surprise.

"There is a sort of hypnotism about a man or a bunch of men who come coolly into a town in the middle of the day, walk up the main street, rob the bank and walk out again, doing just enough shooting to show they can hit anything. The very daring of it puts a spell on the people, paralyzes them with surprise and awe. Before they recover, the bandits are gone."

I knew of one instance where Starr went into a town alone, robbed the bank, walked out three miles and was eating his supper at a farmer's house when the telephone rang. The farmer answered it, and with the receiver in his hand, turned to Starr and said, "The sheriff is calling. He says the bank was held up by one man to-day, and he wants to know if I have seen a suspicious character out this way."

"Tell him the robber is at your house eating supper and for him to come on out and get me," said Starr, and he finished his meal, paid for it and went on.

Starr used to tell me that his reputation as a crack shot was his chief stock in trade as a bandit. That reputation protected him from many a sheriff and other official. At cow camps and in outlying settlements he gave exhibitions of his marksmanship. A man told me that he saw him kill a running coyote with a rifle at six hundred and eighty-five measured yards. At one time he and his gang fitted out a chuck wagon which carried a sheet-iron stove and a lot of bedding and cooking utensils, extra guns, cartridges enough for a five-day battle and food to last a fortnight. They kept constantly in

practise by shooting at marks, and gave exhibitions of shooting that are talked of to this day in that country. A man told me he had seen Starr and his six men all mount in line and ride at top speed past a tree, each man shooting five bullets from a six-shooter at it as he passed, and when the last of the seven men had shot, there were thirty-five bullets in a ring not more than six inches in diameter.

Starr told me that he made an extended study of gun fire, what is called "windage" and "trajectory," and the like, from books, from hearsay and from his own observations. He related, as follows, how the knowledge saved his life once:

"I was out with a couple of the boys, reconnoitering a place where we were planning to hold up a train. It was necessary that I keep on going, but I couldn't do it with the horse I had. I must have another one.

"We stopped at a small ranch where a red-headed man was standing out by the road. About twenty horses were in a pasture one hundred yards from the house. I asked him to sell me one. He answered with a curse that he didn't want any truck with the likes of me.

"His manner angered me a little and I decided to

take one of the horses, anyway, and leave him my lame horse in exchange. I went out to where the horses were, looked them over, picked out the most likely looking one in the bunch and dropped my rope over his neck.

"The red-headed man said never a word, but as I threw my rope he turned quickly into the house. I knew what was going to happen. There was a gate three hundred and fifty yards from the house. I led the horse to that spot, turned him over to the boys and told them to get as fast they could down the road, while I remained behind to entertain Mr. Redhead. I wouldn't be so foolhardy nowadays. But then I was only a kid, you might say, and the saucy manner in which the fellow had cursed me and refused my request had riled me up considerable.

"I saw the women folk run out of the house and dodge into the cellar and I knew the fireworks were about to begin. I yelled at the boys to get themselves and the horses out of range. Then I lay down on my stomach, my head toward the house and my rifle over my elbow. A man lying flat on the ground, with his face to his foe and a gun in his hands is a mighty dangerous person. But very little of his body is exposed as a target. One cool man in that

position can drive off a half-dozen, if he is a good shot. I have seen it done.

"The first shot of Mr. Redhead came from a window and passed to the right of me and a little high. We exchanged about a dozen shots, his passing over my head, but all too high to do any damage. I judged from the singing of the bullets that they were fully a foot from my scalp.

"The last one sent a wind into my face and I realized that he was getting my range. The horses were now out of danger and it was folly for me to remain as a target for him. There was little chance of my winging him, as he shot alternately from two windows and a door and never showed his head. So I decided that unless I wanted to be killed by him I would have to run for it.

"Lying there on the ground, with his bullets flying over my head and getting closer and closer, I figured out an interesting study in the trajectory and windage of flying bullets. I had observed that the wind was blowing quite a breeze from the south. The standard rifle shoots a bullet at the rate of about two thousand feet a second. A man running at the slow progress of one hundred yards in fifteen seconds travels at the rate of twenty-five feet a second,

or about ten feet, while a bullet goes a thousand. So, if I ran southeast, against the wind, at the rate of fifteen seconds to the one hundred yards, and Mr. Redhead should fire point-blank at me, as he was likely to do, the bullet would pass about five feet behind me.

"Of course if my friend, who was trying to take my life, knew enough about windage to make allowance for my speed and the wind I was running in the teeth of, he might pot me as I ran. But I had to take that chance. So I sprang to my feet just as a bullet grazed my hat and ran due southeast with all the speed I could put into my legs. As I ran the fellow fired six bullets at me. Every one passed several feet behind me. He couldn't have hit me in a thousand years. I had outfigured him."

Starr's first big robbery was of the People's Bank in Bentonville, Arkansas. Years afterward I visited him in the penitentiary in McAllister, Oklahoma, where he was serving a term for another robbery, and he gave me an account of the Bentonville raid, which I will give in his own words, as closely as I can recall them.

"The one great obstacle was that after we held up the bank we would have to ride fifteen miles through

Photo from Mr. Sutton's Collection

Belle Starr, "Outlaw Queen," and her husband, Sam Starr

BILLY THE KID

Said to have slain twenty-two men. He was killed when twenty-one years old by Sheriff Pat F. Garrett

Photos from Mr. Sutton's Collection

HENRY STARR

From photograph taken in front of the jail at Chandler, Oklahoma, in 1915, where he was then a prisoner

open country, in daylight, before we could reach cover, and probably that ride would have to be made with an armed mob after us. But, I was in love with a girl, she wouldn't marry me unless I gave up the bandit game and settled down at honest work, so, here was a chance to make a stake that would enable me to take her away to South America or China and start up in business.

"Of course, that was no excuse for robbing a bank, and I am not making excuses; it was outlawry, plain and clear, but as I walked up and down past that bank, looking at the heaps of money, I had just that one idea in my mind, to risk everything for the girl I was daffy over.

"I stayed a week in that town, planning the robbery, studying the habits of the men in the bank, seeing when they opened it and laid the money out, acquainting myself with every street, alley, store, house and vacant lot. When a man rides into a town of that size in broad daylight to rob a bank he does not know what may happen and he must plan in advance for every possible emergency. He may plan to run out one way, and that way may be blocked; then he must know the next best way out of town. It may be impossible to get out of town at all, and

then he must know the best building to take his men into as a fort in which to fight the mob off until dark.

"I rode out over the fifteen miles from the bank to the first hills and trees a dozen times and noted every feature of the route. I got acquainted with the town marshal and studied his habits. I located the hardware stores and where they kept their firearms and ammunition. It might be that we would need to raid those supplies. I'll venture to say that after a week in that town I knew it better than any man in it. I planned every detail of the robbery and the get-away. I would lie awake far into the night, thinking of it, trying to foresee any possible disaster and how to get around it. Then I rode back to camp and laid the plan before my men.

"We sat all one night around the camp-fire, talking it over. At first they agreed that it couldn't be done. The ride of fifteen miles to cover was impossible. But I urged it and said if they would follow me and do exactly what I said the chances were nine in ten that we would make it. At last we tossed up a dollar, heads to go, tails to stay out, and heads came up.

" 'Boys,' I ordered, before we started, 'there is to

be no killing here unless we have to kill to get away. No reckless taking of life. But, if it is necessary don't hesitate a second and don't waste a shot, shoot to kill, every time.'

"Of course that's murder. Every bandit is a potential murderer. No man ever robbed at the heel of a gun without murder in his heart, and he deserves no pity nor sympathy.

"Going into town Frank Cheney and I rode ahead in a buggy, with our horses led behind. The buggy was necessary to smuggle our rifles in. Our six-shooters were under our coats. There were seven of us. The other five rode on horses, strung out behind so as not to excite suspicion.

"Every move had been planned ahead and rehearsed over and over again around the camp-fire. We stopped the buggy behind the bank, got out and hitched the horses, and by that time the others had come up and dismounted, and Happy Jack gathered the bridle reins of the seven saddle horses and held them. The other six of us grabbed our rifles from the buggy and each ran to his assigned position and work. Bud Tyler and Hank Watt stood between the bank door and the horses to keep the way open. Link Cumplin stood watch at the bank door. I, with Kid

Wilson and Frank Cheney at my heels, ran into the bank.

"It was two-thirty o'clock in the afternoon. I chose that hour because there would be most money in sight then, and it would be only six hours until dark, and we might need the cover of darkness before getting into the clear. Cheney and Wilson leaped the counters, Cheney went into the vault, Wilson swept the money from the counter, I held up the six men in the bank and stood them in a row against the wall.

"The bank was on a corner of the square. Scores of people saw us enter and knew us for bandits. Shooting began the moment we entered the bank. I heard the shots, slap, bang, at Link, who was walking up and down in front, shooting at every head that showed. Every second of time now might mean the difference between life or death for each man of us. The plan was that if Link was shot down Tyler was to run up and take his place.

"It seemed to me we were an hour in that bank, but it couldn't have been more than a minute or two before Cheney and Wilson sprang over the counter with the money in a sack. To the six men against the wall I said:

" 'You men do exactly as I tell you and you won't get hurt. Try any tricks and I'll kill you. Don't try to run.'

"I meant to use the six men as a screen to march behind as we went to our horses, but when we got out, fifteen or twenty men were shooting at us; it was as dangerous for them to stay with us as it was to run, and they just melted out of sight like snowflakes in a puddle.

" 'Shoot to kill, boys,' I ordered, and we did so, as we backed to our horses. I saw four men fall, and many more were wounded, but none was killed.

"Link was shot almost to rags. One eye was shot out. An arm was shot through twice, and there were eight bullet wounds in other places, but still he stood his ground at the bank door and with his six-shooter in his good hand he was blazing away when I came out. I put one arm around him and helped him to his horse. I heard the blood mushing in his boots as he walked.

" 'Can you make it, Link?' I asked him as I put him on his horse.

" 'Sure. I'm all hunkey,' he answered with a grin.

" 'Then light out. I'll be behind you all the way.'

"We tore out, all seven of us, not a man lost. A posse of hundreds chased us and thousands of bullets volleyed after us, but I never did think that posse tried very hard to get within gunshot distance of us. To make a long story short, we got away, safely.

"The sack was stuffed with enough money to choke an elephant, but there was only eleven thousand dollars, only a little over fifteen hundred dollars apiece, trifling pay for such a desperate venture, not enough to let me quit the game and marry, and I never did marry that girl, luckily for her."

"And what became of those six men?" I asked Starr.

"Frank Cheney was killed by marshals a year later. He was a daring fellow and very witty, and in times of greatest discomfort or danger he would tell a funny story or crack a joke. Once a posse cornered us in a thicket. We lay on our stomachs, a blanket spread out on the ground in front of us, a hundred or more cartridges strewn over the blanket within easy reach, our rifles ready, expecting a charge, and probably death for some of us, at any minute.

"The posse was not quite a hundred feet away.

One man in it was unusually tall and lanky. Cheney's rifle was trained on him, and he turned his face toward me, lying next to him, and whispered:

" 'That hombre is so thin if he'd shut one eye he'd look like a needle.'

"I had to clap my hand over my mouth to keep from laughing out loud.

"Link Cumpelin went to Alaska, tried to hold up an express messenger and was killed. Happy Jack was killed by marshals a few months after the Bentonville robbery. Kid Wilson was arrested with me later in Colorado Springs, went to a penitentiary in Brooklyn, was paroled, went back to banditry and was killed. Bud Tyler was the only one of the six who died in bed. All the others died with their boots on."

Three years after the Bentonville raid, Starr was captured and taken to Fort Smith, where fourteen indictments for robbery and one for murder were awaiting him. He was sent to the Columbus, Ohio, penitentiary as a Federal prisoner, was pardoned by Roosevelt on his promise to reform, married, entered the real-estate business at Tulsa, prospered for five years, then went to robbing banks again.

"Why didn't you stick to honest work?" I asked

him, after he had been captured again, and he told me this story:

"After I robbed the bank in Bentonville the authorities there indicted me and kept that indictment alive all through the years I was in prison and after I came out. When I went into the real-estate business in Tulsa it was in the Indian Territory and Arkansas could not extradite me, but they watched me as a cat would a mouse. I was determined to go straight, and when Oklahoma became a state and elected its first governor, I took my boy, Roosevelt, down to Guthrie to see him inaugurated, and I lifted little Roosevelt up on my shoulder and said to him:

" 'Roosevelt, you listen to what I am going to say to you, and don't you ever forget it as long as you live. You see that man up there, talking? He is the first governor of Oklahoma. The people elected him because he was a good man and never did anything wrong. There will be many more governors in the years to come, and you may be one of them if you never do a thing that is wrong. I want you to promise me.' And little Roosevelt put his arm around my neck and said, 'Daddy, I promise, and I'll be the governor some day.'

"As soon as the new governor got settled, Arkansas applied for my surrender. I sent a friend to see the governor to tell him how for five years I had been going straight, and to beg him not to let the Arkansas wolves get me. I did not know what the governor might do, but I was determined not to go to Arkansas, for there I would have been sent up for life. So I hid out in the home of a friend in the Osage hills, and my friend in Guthrie was to watch for the governor's decision and telephone the very moment it was made. One day the telephone rang and the message I got was: 'He has granted it.'

"I stayed in hiding. Within a month several banks were robbed in Oklahoma. I had nothing to do with them, but the newspapers printed scare-head stories saying that I had got off the reservation again, with forty kinds of war paint on, and was robbing in daylight in my old style.

"Well, what could I do? I was a fugitive. I had the name of robbing the banks. I might as well have the game. So I decided to touch up a bank or two to get enough money to leave the country. I did that and I and my bandit friend started on horseback for California. Passing through Colorado, we came to the town of Amity, and there was a bank that looked

so easy to rob it was a shame to pass it up. I was caught and I went to the penitentiary in Canyon City for twenty-five years.

"But, what a fiddler is fate! After I landed in the penitentiary in Colorado I learned that my friend did not telephone me: 'He has granted it'; but his message was 'He hasn't granted it'; and my fateful failure to hear aright made me a bandit again."

CHAPTER XVI

THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T BE GOOD

WHILE a convict in Colorado, Starr was for four years in charge of a road-building camp with one hundred convicts under him. He managed them so well and his record was so good that he was paroled.

"I promised not to leave Colorado," Starr said to me. "But the desire to take my boy into my arms became so strong that I beat my way back to Oklahoma, sleeping in cattle cars, bumming my chuck at back doors. When I reached Tulsa I found that my wife had got a divorce and I did not see my boy after all.

"Bank robbery had become an established business in Oklahoma. In the seven years just prior to my return two hundred and one banks were held up in that state. Between June fourteenth and September fourteenth, the three months after my return, fourteen banks were robbed in daylight. The newspapers said I did it. The legislature, for the first time in its history, offered a reward for a bandit. It posted one thousand dollars for me, dead or alive. It made me desperate."

Probably the most spectacular robbery that ever occurred in Oklahoma was at Stroud, where Starr and his six men held up and robbed two banks in one day. After getting the money they started for their horses, Starr walking backward as a rear guard to his men and holding the townspeople at bay. On the way they passed a butcher shop in which there was a loaded sawed-off rifle used for killing hogs. Paul Cury, a boy, snatched this rifle from a corner and shot Starr in the hip. Starr fell and his men turned to help him.

"I'm done for, boys, save yourselves," Starr said to them.

It was the first time in his life that Starr had been wounded. Thousands of bullets had been fired at him, at close and at long range. His clothing had been cut by bullets many times, but his skin never touched. He had an idea that he was bullet-proof.

There was talk in Stroud of lynching Starr. He sent for Bill Tilghman. I went with Tilghman to see Starr, who said to Bill: "You are the only officer who ever spoke kindly to me and gave me good advice. I don't want to be lynched. I have sent for you to protect me and to bring my old mother and my boy here to see me."

Tilghman stopped the talk of lynching and Starr was removed to the jail in Chandler. I saw his boy come into the cell where he lay on a cot, and Starr clasped him in his arms and sobbed.

"Starr, you promised me you would quit. I believed you, and here I find you, not satisfied to rob just one bank but pulling a double-header," Tilghman said to him.

"Well, Mr. Tilghman, when I came to Stroud to look it over, I saw it was just as easy to rob two banks as one, so I decided to kill two birds with one stone."

Starr recovered from his wound and was sent to the penitentiary for twenty-five years. He served five or six years and was such a model prisoner and seemed so thoroughly reformed that he was paroled. I lost track of him for several years, but read often about him, in scare-head accounts in the newspapers, of bank robberies in different towns in Oklahoma.

Then one day, I met Starr in the lobby of the Baltimore Hotel in Kansas City. He seemed old and broken. There was a troubled look in his eyes; his shoulders were stooped and he limped as he walked. We sat down together to have a talk.

"Henry," I said, "you are robbing banks again."

"That's what they say," he replied.

"If I did my duty I'd turn you over to the police here."

"That wouldn't do anybody any good," he suggested.

"You promised Tilghman that you'd give up banditry. You've broken every promise you ever made. You're incorrigible, a habitual criminal. A criminologist would class you as a born criminal, impossible to reform. In all the annals of criminology I don't suppose a more discouraging case could be found than yours."

"Criminology?" sneered Starr. "Where do you get that stuff? There is no such thing as criminology, a science of crime. There is no such thing as a criminologist, a man learned in the science of crime. There is no such thing as a confirmed criminal mind. There is no such thing as a born criminal, as hereditary badness, unless the person is insane. I think I ought to know criminals. They have been my companions for forty years, in prison and out. I have eaten and slept with them, helped them plan crimes, led them into crimes, knelt beside them when they died. I have known their innermost thoughts,

their strivings, their sufferings, their failures and their successes.

"If the bad criminal mind is hereditary, then the good honest mind is hereditary, too; and all the sons of preachers and doctors and deacons and honest bankers would be good, like their parents. But, nearly all the bandits and outlaws and criminals I have known were sons of good fathers and mothers. In all my life I never knew a criminal who had a bad mother. I never knew a criminal who didn't love his mother. I've heard the last word on the lips of several outlaws and it was always: 'Mother.' And the most of the hundreds of criminals I have known had good, honest fathers. One of the worst outlaws I ever knew was the son of a preacher.

"If the criminal tendency was hereditary the sons of every criminal would be criminals, too. I never knew the son of an outlaw to be a criminal. Some of the best men I ever knew were the sons of outlaws. The sons of criminals usually turn out well, just as the sons of drunkards are nearly all prohibitionists. As an example, look at the children and grandchildren of Frank and Jesse James, the two worst outlaws the West ever knew. Frank's only son, Robert, was born when Frank was in hiding, an outlaw with

a price on his head. If there is anything in hereditary badness Robert James should be a humdinger for wickedness, but he is a farmer in Clay County, Missouri, married and highly respected by all his neighbors. Why, they talked about running him for a high county office recently. They don't make 'em any better than Robert James.

"Jesse James had two children, Jesse, Junior, and Mary. Jesse is a lawyer here in Kansas City. His four daughters were graduated with honors from high school. They are all members of the church and one went nine years to Sunday-school without missing a day and was the gold-medal student in a Sunday-school with a thousand pupils. Mary James, only daughter of Jesse, the bandit, married Henry Barr, a farmer of Clay County, and her three sons are leaders in the Methodist church in Excelsior Springs. One of them is studying to be a preacher and he graduated at the head of his class in a Baptist college. How is that for heredity?

"The criminal tendency is not transmitted from father to son, any more than the tendency to be religious is transmitted. Getting religion depends upon environment and circumstance. Religion is not born in a fellow. A man gets religion in the same

way he catches the measles or whooping cough, by coming in contact with it. So, criminals are made by environment and circumstance. Crime is simply misdirected energy. Emerson said a weed was a plant out of its place. A criminal is a man out of his place. Maybe he never had a chance to be honest. He may have been led or pushed into crime, as I was. But there is no such thing as a confirmed criminal mind. There is no permanent criminal class. You can't classify criminals, for the man who is a criminal to-day may take a new slant to-morrow and be an honest man. In the five years I was selling real-estate in Tulsa I was not a criminal. The moment I decided to live within the law I ceased to be a criminal. The minute I decided to rob another bank I was a criminal again.

"There is no more a science of criminology than there is a science of eatology or drinkology or lawyerology. You say a criminal has certain wheels in his head that lead him to be always a criminal in spite of all efforts to reform. You might as well say a lawyer has certain cogs in his brain and bumps on his nut that make him follow the law in spite of all efforts to get away from it. Bunk! We all know a lawyer can quit that game any time he wants to. So

can a criminal quit, and they do. There are millions of former criminals in honest occupations in this country. Any criminal may take a notion any time to be an honest man. The best inducement to hold out to criminals to reform is square, honest, kind treatment. The worst thing you can do to a criminal is to put him in a class by himself, to treat him as if he were a creature set apart. He is just an average man who has gone wrong, that's all.

"I have thought a great deal on this subject," continued the old outlaw. "And I want to say that there are strong emotions that may work a change for the worse in a man, just as there are strong emotions that work to make a change for the better. Under the influence of a great religious emotion a man who has been as bad as a man can be may be instantly changed, 'in the twinkling of an eye,' as the Scripture says, to be a good man. Just the same, under the influence of a great and deep emotion, a man may be changed to a bad one. I know that, because that very kind of a change took place in me."

As we sat close together in the hotel lobby Starr told me how that change came over him.

"A great deal has been written about me that was not true," he said. "One magazine writer, a pro-

fessor who calls himself a criminologist, has lately written a piece about me to prove his contention that the criminal taint was hereditary. 'Look at Henry Starr,' this college sharp says. 'Look at that notorious bandit, descended from a string of bandits, cutthroats and gallows birds that extends back as far as we can trace his ancestry. It proves that the criminal trait is transmitted from father to son, down through the generations.'

"Another false thing often said of me was that I am a son of Belle Starr the woman bandit. I am not even related to her, by blood. She was the wife of Sam Starr, my cousin. My father was a splendid man, and my mother was one of nature's noblewomen.

"There was never a criminal in my ancestry as far back as I can trace it. I am the first, and I was forced into it.

"Until I was eighteen years old my life was spent in the open, far from towns, and I was clean-hearted and believed every one else was the same. Then I was arrested on a false charge of horse-stealing, a crime punishable by death in our country. The most despicable wretch on earth, in our estimation, was a horse thief, and here I was branded as one for ever.

You can't imagine my shame and mortification when I was arrested as one.

"I was handcuffed and marched to a hotel, and, in that condition, taken into the dining-room for my supper. I was so ashamed I bowed my head on my arms and hid my face. That night I was chained to a bed while a deputy marshal slept near me on the floor.

Even after this lapse of years I can not look back to those cold chains upon my ankles and wrists without a murderous feeling coming over me.

"I can not describe the change that came over me that night. Let the scientists, Lombroso and the rest of them, figure out if they can the psychological change that was wrought in me in that one night in chains. For there was that change. I became a new being, with new motives and new ambitions. That night the honest, innocent country boy ceased to be and I became in my heart an outlaw."

"But," I said, "you are yet the master of your own destiny, as you were then."

"Yes," he answered. "That is true."

"Well, when are you going to get a hunch, or an emotion, as you call it, to reform and go straight?"

"One of these days, when I make the big strike and get money enough to settle down."

"So that's it, hey? You are a criminal from deliberate choice, for money. When you make a big haul you will settle down."

As we parted he limped to the door with me and said:

"Mr. Sutton, you are saying good-by to the biggest fool and failure in seven states. I've wasted my whole life, but I did it myself and am wholly responsible, and so is every criminal."

A year later Starr held up a bank at Harrison, Arkansas. He backed the two officials into the vault, intending to lock them in and take the money and escape. But the cashier had hidden a loaded gun in the vault for just such an emergency, and with it he shot and killed Starr.

Starr did his first bank robbery, and his last, in Arkansas. In the thirty-five years between the two he had spent twenty years behind the bars in different prisons. He died without a dollar, but he was not buried as a pauper. Years before, while flush with money from some robbery, he had paid in full for his burial expenses, in advance, to an undertaker at Tulsa.

"Some day you will read in the paper that Henry Starr was killed while holding up a bank," he said to the undertaker. "Then you see to it that I am buried decently, with my boots off."

CHAPTER XVII

WITH HIS BOOTS ON

In my sixty years on the western frontier I knew only one man that wished to die with his boots on. I know of seventy-five United States deputy marshals who died with their boots on, shot down by outlaws, while on duty. It was an honor to die in that way, as much so as for a soldier to die on the battlefield, fighting for his country, but none of them craved that sort of passing.

All outlaws had a horror of dying with their boots on. I imagine that came largely from the custom in an early day of burying a desperado as he fell, with his boots on his feet, and without coffin or funeral rites. No matter how desperate a man was, or how recklessly he risked his life, he dreaded that kind of a burial.

One of the worst of all the border bandits was "Black-Faced Charley." He got his name from a scar on his face, the result of a duel with a cowboy. A bullet creased his cheek and the powder buried itself under the skin, making a splotch of dark dots.

My first meeting with Black-Faced Charley was

when I was out buying cavalry horses for the government. I was riding a broncho, and, to ask the way, I stopped at Turkey Track ranch, on Profanity Creek, a few miles east of Euchee, on the old Cimarron trail. A man with a powder-burned scar on his cheek very courteously directed me. I had no idea then that he was Black-Faced Charley, of the Dalton gang of outlaws. Later I met the same man in Enid, and we discovered that as boys we had been schoolmates at Atchison, Kansas, at the little Shannon Hill school taught by A. G. Drew. His name was Charley Bryant. We talked of old times and called each other by our first names, but even then, in Enid, I did not know he was a bandit.

A year later the Dalton gang held up the Santa Fé train at Wharton. The telegraph operator, a boy, started to send a message for help. The outlaws discovered him at it and Black-Faced Charley shot him dead.

Ed Short, United States deputy marshal, was detailed to hunt down the Dalton band, and he was on its trail when he got word that Black-Faced Charley had been wounded in a running fight that began at a cowboy dance near Hennessy. Short found him in bed, and before the outlaw could get his six-

shooter from under his pillow, Short sprang upon him and handcuffed him. He started with his prisoner for the Federal jail in Wichita. He put him in the express car. After the train started Short gave the express messenger the bandit's loaded six-shooter and said:

"I am going back into the passenger coach to visit for a while with a friend. Keep your eye on the prisoner and if he makes a crooked move, hold him down."

Short made the mistake of handcuffing the outlaw's wrists in front of him instead of behind. The bandit sat in a chair. The messenger was at a desk in front of him, making out a report. The six-shooter was in a pigeonhole above the messenger's head. The bandit stole silently up behind him, reached over his head, snatched the loaded six-shooter in his manacled hands, and held up the messenger. At that moment the end door of the express car opened and Short came in to look after his prisoner. The bandit, holding his six-shooter in both hands, shot at Short. The bullet tore a great hole close to the marshal's heart; he staggered back, but drew his own six-shooter and put a bullet through the bandit's hip.

Then began a spectacular duel between those two men of iron nerve, one within, the other without the law. The train slowed down for the station at Waukomis. The two men, shooting at each other at close range, fought out through the car door and were on its platform as the train stopped.

I was there, on the station platform, as Black-Faced Charley rolled down the car steps and out on the planks of the loading dock, still holding his empty six-shooter in his shackled hands. Ed Short would have fallen off, too, but the conductor, James Collins, caught him in his arms and helped him down. As he lay on the station platform Short said:

"I got that bandit, but he got me, too. I'm all in."

"Have you any message?" asked the conductor, bending over him.

"Please take my boots off, and send for mother," were his last words.

Within six feet of him lay Black-Faced Charley, gasping for breath and dying. He recognized me, and I knew him from the scar on his face. I had heard, often, of Black-Faced Charley, but this was the first time I even suspected that my boy schoolmate, Charley Bryant, was that outlaw. As he lay

dying I thought of him only as the boy I had known, and I asked:

"Can I do anything for you, Charley?"

"Yes, Fred, please pull my boots off, and don't tell the folks back home," and those were his last words.

When I was a younger man I saw another duel to the death. It was on the banks of Red River. I was a cowboy, then, and had been working for the Jingle-Bob outfit, so named because of its peculiar brand, which was made by cutting loose a strip of hide on the brisket of a beef animal, below the neck, and letting it hang down. It soon healed and hung there, like a finger. It was called a "jingle-bob."

We had been up north with a trail herd and were returning. One noon we stopped to eat and rest, and after dinner four of us cowboys were playing poker on a blanket, when one accused another of cheating. In those days you might as well charge a man with horse-stealing as with cheating at cards, and the one so accused laid down his hand, looked across the blanket at the other and said:

"You know what that means?"

"Yes, I know exactly what it means," and he laid his cards down.

The two men had been the best of friends, but now they sprang to their feet and each drew his six-shooter. I and the fourth man started to interfere, but one of the duelists said to me:

"Kid, you keep out of this; it is our fight," and he yanked his red handkerchief from his neck, took hold of one corner, flipped the opposite corner to his opponent and snarled:

"Take hold of that and we'll shoot it out."

They stood, toe to toe, each holding a corner of the outstretched handkerchief with his left hand, and a six-shooter in his right. In that position the muzzles of their guns almost touched above the handkerchief.

"Now count three," said one of them, and I counted: "One, two, three!" and both guns blazed, and both men fell, mortally wounded.

I leaped to take the head of one in my lap, and with his last breath he whispered: "Fred, please pull off my boots, and write to mother and tell her I died game."

The other dying man said to the cowboy bending over him: "Don't bury me with my boots on."

We took off their boots, scooped a shallow grave in the black prairie soil there, on the bank of Red

River, buried them together and placed their high-heeled cowboy boots on top of the grave. I am sure I could find that lonely grave to-day, although I have never been there since, and that was forty years ago.

In these days that way of settling quarrels would seem like a senseless risk and waste of one's life, but those were the days of the six-shooter, and that was the code of the border.

When the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indian reservation was opened to white settlement one of the men who raced in on horseback and won a farm was Zip Wyatt. For two years he lived there, quietly working his farm, and highly respected. Then it was learned that he was a fugitive from justice in Missouri. He had slain a man in a quarrel over a Fourth-of-July horse-race. Zip got word that a sheriff from Missouri was after him, and he abandoned his farm in a hurry and started for the hills.

That same day a United States deputy marshal attempted to arrest Dick Yeager, a neighbor of Wyatt, on a charge of cutting trees for fence posts on government land in the Gyp hills. Yeager shot and killed the marshal, and he ran to hide in the hills. On the way he met Wyatt and the two stopped

to talk. Both were fugitives, and they made their way together to a cave near the head of Salt Creek.

They had to come out occasionally at night to steal provisions, clothing and other supplies, and those two men, hiding there and stealing out on their forays, drew other fugitives from the law, as a magnet attracts particles of steel, and this led to the formation of one of the most desperate and bothersome gangs of outlaws that ever operated in Oklahoma. Yeager was its leader. He became so bold and reckless he was known as "Wild Dick" Yeager. With him, besides Zip Wyatt, were "Rattlesnake Charlie," George Black and his wife, Pearl, and "Indian Bob," a half-breed.

This gang held up and robbed a Santa Fé train at Enid. Then it held up a Rock Island train near Dover. A posse overtook the gang at Cottonwood crossing on the Cimarron River and Indian Bob and Rattlesnake Charlie were killed. Members of the posse told me that the most vicious shooter in that fight was Pearl Black, the woman bandit, but it was her last fight and her last robbery, for when the gang regained its camp in the hills she arose at night, secretly, and took her share of the money and the best horse in the remuda and disappeared.

Bill Tilghman, the veteran marshal, told me that for years he searched for her, and found her, a respected wife and mother, in a little town in western Oklahoma. He went there, intending to arrest her, but when he saw how she was living, and that no one but him knew of her past, he came away. He did not even disclose his identity to her, and she never knew, and never will know, unless she reads this, how closely she came to being unmasked and her husband and children disgraced.

Just to hear what Tilghman would say, I asked him: "Why didn't you arrest her?"

"What for?" he asked. "How could the law have been vindicated or justice done by exposing her or her family to shame? That would have been injustice. At any rate, whether I did right or wrong, I took it upon my own shoulders, and I will answer for it at that final bar of justice where all of us will be judged."

The Yeager gang was at last run down by a posse of marshals and sheriffs. Wild Dick and Black were cornered and Black was shot down. As he fell forward on his face he called to Yeager:

"Dick, pull my boots off. I'm dying."

But Wild Dick had to mount and run in a hurry.

As he went he was shot through the hips, but escaped. The following day the posse saw his horse in the middle of a corn-field, standing quietly with his head drooped. The posse surrounded the field and closed cautiously in. Wild Dick lay there, dead. He had dismounted, and having the aversion, common to every outlaw, of dying with his boots on, he had taken them off as he felt death creeping over him, and he died in his stockinged feet. His horse, "Cyclone," had stood, all night and part of a day, in the exact place he was in when Wild Dick dismounted and dropped the ends of the bridle reins to the ground. The horse was trained to do that. The ends of the bridle reins of a plainsman's horse were never tied or buckled together. They were always apart, for this reason:

If the bridle reins were tied together and dropped on the neck of a cow pony or any other western horse, he would keep on going, but, a horseman, dismounting, would drop the two ends of his bridle reins to the ground and the pony would stand there, thinking he was tied.

At the World's Fair in St. Louis was a group of statuary with a cowboy lying on the grass, his head propped up on his hand and elbow, and his horse

Photo from Mr. Sutton's Collection

AL JENNINGS, Bandit Leader

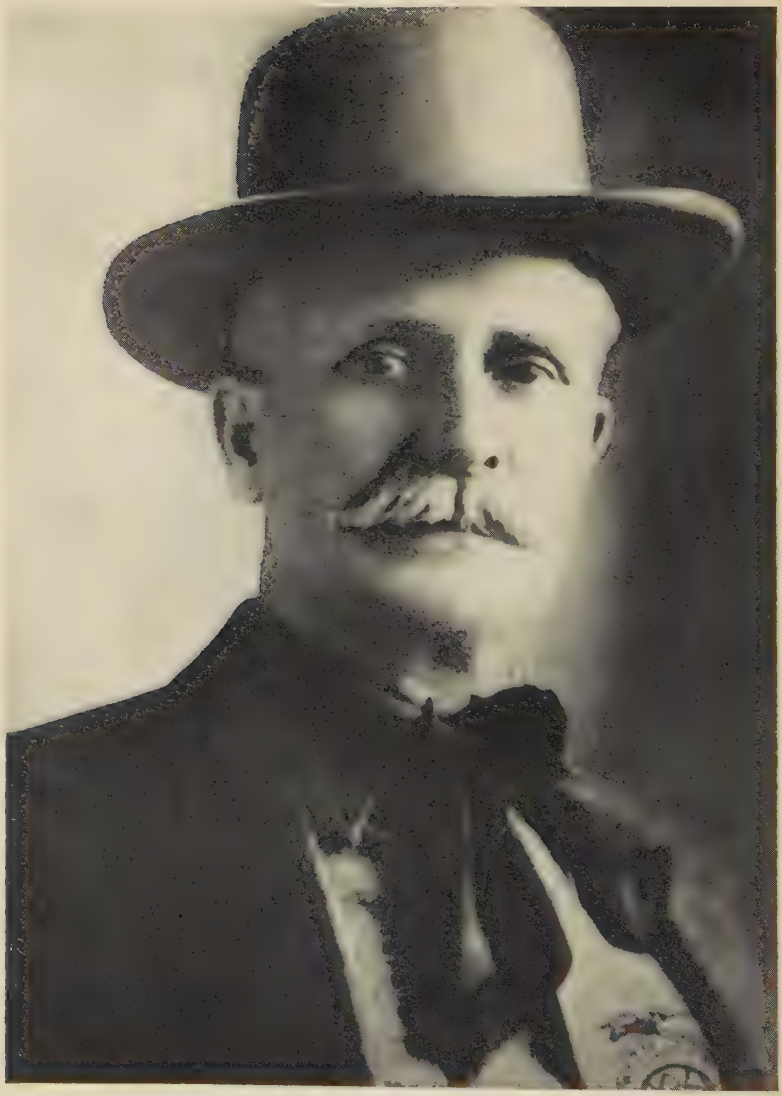

Photo from Mr. Sutton's Collection

BILL TILGHMAN

For fifty years a gunman on the side of the law on the frontier of the old Wild West

standing near him, with head bent down over him. It was a wonderful work of art. The pose of the horse was perfect, and the cowboy was true to life, but there was this one mistake in it: the bridle reins, the ends tied together, were looped over the saddle-horn. This slight discrepancy was noticed at once by the thousands of cattlemen, cowboys and ranchmen who visited the exposition, and they criticized it and found so much fault with it and laughed at it so much that at last it was taken from the grounds.

While I was a United States deputy marshal I was sent alone to find and bring in Nip Van, an outlaw who had killed a man on government property. I had known Van for several years and I felt certain that if I encountered him he would surrender without a fight. I went on horseback, my saddle-bags stuffed with chuck, and armed with two six-shooters and Belle Starr's rifle. I came up with Van at a place where the road curved at the foot of a high bluff. He was on horseback. I called to him to surrender, and did not think that he would resist, but the moment he heard me he wheeled his horse sidewise and slipped from his saddle, Indian fashion, and hung on the off side of his horse, with his left

hand clinging to the mane and the spur on his left heel hooked over the saddle-horn. In that position he aimed his six-shooter under his horse's neck and shot at me. His bullet tore through my coat. I dropped from my saddle to the ground, on the sheltered side of my pony, and pulled Belle Starr's rifle from its holster.

The only part of Van visible to me was the sole and heel of his left boot, sticking above the saddle. I shot at it and missed, the bullet kicking out a spurt of sand and dust from the bank behind Van. I saw that in drawing the rifle hastily from its holster I had disarranged the sight on it and that explained why I had overshot Van's foot. I adjusted the sight, shot again and put a bullet through the center of Van's boot sole and foot. That loosened his hold and he fell to the ground.

I called to him, "Throw your guns," and he threw away two six-shooters.

"Nip," I said as I walked over to him, "you tried to kill me. What in the world did you do that for?"

He grinned and answered: "Old pal, I was sure shootin' at you, wasn't I?"

"It was a foolish act, for if you had killed me a

posse of marshals would have got you," I told him.

"I'd have given 'em a run," he answered.

As I cut his boot from his foot to give him first-aid treatment he kept grinning and said: "Well, if I die it won't be with both boots on, anyway."

I took off my own shirt and cut it into bandages to dress his foot, in which the bullet had crushed several bones, and in the horseback ride of fourteen miles to the railroad he never whimpered.

For ten years I owned the C-Bar ranch in Sulphur Springs Valley, Arizona, and used to spend two or three months there every fall. In that way I became acquainted with "One-Shot Charley" Duesha, a gunman who had killed thirty-two men. He was nicknamed "One-Shot" because he seldom spent more than one bullet on a man. When he was a young man he and a Spaniard fought a duel with bowie knives. Duesha killed the Spaniard, but his own right arm was slashed so badly that it ever afterward hung useless at his side. In shooting he used a left-hand draw, and that gave him an advantage in a gun fight. His opponent would watch Duesha's right hand, and, seeing that it did not move, would think that he had the advantage in the draw, but Duesha's left would draw a six-shooter

with dazzling quickness, and it was never known to miss.

Duesha, an old man when I knew him, owned a little tract of wooded land in the Dragoon Mountains. I used to buy fence posts from him, and he would haul them to my ranch and sit with me by the hour and talk. He said to me once, in the quaint patois of the western hill country, which I can not reproduce:

"Here I be, goin' on eighty year' ole, an' it's a quar thing that all my life I've dreaded dyin' with my boots on. I've made thirty-two other men die with thar boots on. Looks like I ort've bin reconciled to dyin' in my boots, seein' as how I bu'sted into so many chances, but the very idee of bein' buried with my boots on jist natcherally made cold chills chase theirselves up an' down my backbone."

"Why is that, Charley? Why do you dread being buried with your boots on? What difference does it make after you are gone?"

He picked a splinter from an osage orange post and chewed on it as he made answer:

"Thet puts me in mind of a story, of a feller back here in the hills; he got down in the mouth 'bout some sheep thet died on his hands, an' he went to

the correl an' hung hisself with an ole bridle; but afore he wuz dead another feller cut him down. When he come to he wuz plum riled up an' sez: 'What fur did you cut me down? I wuz jist goin' into Heaven.' An' the feller thet saved him sez: 'You'd look fine, you would, goin' into Heaven with a blind bridle on.' I had jist thet same idee 'bout stumpin' into Heaven with an' ole pair of boots on."

When he was a young man Duesha was the star gunman for the cattle men of the Tonto Basin in their war with the sheepmen over which were to have the ranges. In that war he killed more than twenty men. The sheepmen imported two expert gunmen to kill Duesha. He met them on the Tonto trail and downed them both. The sheriff of Apache County had a warrant for Duesha's arrest. Duesha rode down to Flagstaff and walked into the office of the sheriff.

"I hear you bin lookin' fer me, Sheriff," he said.

"'Tain't so," retorted the sheriff.

"Glad to hear that," said Duesha, and he turned to go, but wheeled suddenly and saw the sheriff drawing his six-shooter. Duesha beat him to the draw, took the warrant from the pocket of the dead sheriff and went back home. A posse went after him

and he repulsed it, single handed, but four bullets went through his body. A friend took him to a hospital in Phoenix, and Doctor Hughes said to Duesha:

"You have four bullet holes through your chest."

"Four, eh? Well, dig four holes for four mutton herders. I fired five bullets, killed four, an' shot wild onct," he replied.

After that they gave him a wide berth. His fame as "One-Shot Duesha" had spread over all the range country. The sheepmen held him to be a fiend, but the cattle men looked on him as a hero. He was eighty-five years old when he died recently, not with his boots on, but in his own bed.

Arkansaw Tom was another gunman who had a besetting dread of dying with his boots on. In his bandit career he killed eighteen men, and he was the only outlaw I ever knew who suffered from remorse. In the different periods when he had reformed and was "going straight" I have seen him lie on the floor, his face buried in his arms, and weep because of the murders he had done.

He was tall, lank and thin-faced, with a long black mustache. He had been a cowboy on the H. X. Bar ranch in Oklahoma with Bill Doolin and

Bitter Creek, and drifted with them into banditry. In a battle between the Doolin gang of bandits and a posse of field marshals at Ingalls, he was captured. He was sent for life to the penitentiary and served seventeen years there, and all through that time he refused to tell any one his right name. "Arkansaw Tom is a good enough name, let it go at that," he would say when questioned about it. As Arkansaw Tom he was tried, convicted, entered on the prison records and pardoned.

Marshal Bill Tilghman had a strong liking for Arkansaw Tom. We all knew that he was of good family, somewhere, and that he had been well educated. His manner and speech disclosed that, and when, after seventeen years as a model prisoner, he asked Tilghman to try to get him pardoned, so he would not have to die in prison, Tilghman went to see him. He returned from the penitentiary and said to me:

"I'm going to work to get Arkansaw Tom out of prison. I believe he has genuinely reformed and will make a good citizen."

When Tom was pardoned he came straight to Oklahoma City and reported to Tilghman. He said, "I want to do what I can to live down the past

and make amends and show the people that a bandit can turn over a new leaf."

"As long as you travel that road I'll go with you, every step of the way," Tilghman said to him.

Tilghman brought him over to my office in the Insurance building and asked me to cheer him up. So Tom spent a good deal of time there, and the more I saw of him the better I liked him. One day he came and asked if he might stay in my office all the afternoon.

"I met Clyde Mattox on the street and he keeps trailing me around. I don't want to see him," said Tom.

Mattox was an outlaw.

Tom used to sit and tell me of the men he had killed and would cry. "My God! Think of those men, who would be walking around, enjoying life, if it were not for me," he said one day. "But I have one thing to be thankful for, that I did not get killed and die with my boots on. That is one thing I always had a dread of."

To see Arkansaw Tom sitting in my office, so meekly drawing at his corn-cob pipe, stroking the long hairs of his mustache with the end of the pipe stem, and slowly putting it between his teeth again,

a stranger would never imagine he had slain eighteen men. A clergyman of my acquaintance called one day and I introduced Tom, and said that he was the notorious bandit who had slain eighteen men, but was now reformed.

He and Tom talked together for a while and Tom asked him:

"You don't doubt, do you, that my reform is sincere?"

"Since you have brought up the subject I shall be frank with you and say that I do have positive doubts as to whether a man who, while in the act of robbery, has deliberately taken eighteen lives, can ever reform. He is too inherently bad, and I think a mistake was made in pardoning you. You should have been hanged, but, failing in that, you should have remained in prison the balance of your life," said my friend, the clergyman.

"And then gone to hell, I suppose?" asked Tom.

"Yes, and then gone to hell. Hell was made for such men as you."

"So, you would deny to my soul the right of regeneration. Is that what your Bible teaches?" questioned Tom.

"My Bible teaches that there is an unpardon-

able sin, and my opinion is that you have committed it."

And as the preacher went out he said to me: "Mr. Sutton, I am your friend, and in all friendliness I will say that I think you are making a mistake in harboring this fellow. His hands are red with the blood of his fellow men, and in the end he will betray your confidence."

"Maybe the devil that was in him has been cast out," I suggested, but the preacher shook his head.

Tilghman and I found work for Tom with a wholesale grocery concern in eastern Oklahoma, and for a long time I had a postal card from him each week, telling me how well he was doing. Then the cards stopped coming. Time ran on and one day I met Tilghman and asked:

"What's become of Arkansaw Tom?"

"Haven't you heard? He held up a bank in Missouri, was captured and sent for eight years to the penitentiary there. He got twenty-five thousand dollars in the robbery and none of it has been recovered. I have been up to the prison to see Tom, but he insists that he did not get a dollar in the bank robbery."

Shortly after that I had business for the United

States marshal in Missouri, and while there I went to the penitentiary in Jefferson City to see Tom. When I asked the warden if I might see him the warden said:

"He is the nicest man I ever saw locked up."

"Yes," I replied, "he is a likable fellow, but don't let him get his hands on a six-shooter."

Tom wept when we met, and when I asked him why in the world he went back to outlawry again after we had done so much for him, he said:

"I can't tell you what's wrong with me. It's as much of a mystery to me as it is to you. I was happy in that job. It was the first time since I was a boy that I was living right. I was going to church every Sunday, and then I saw that bank and it was such an easy proposition to rob it that I could not resist the temptation. You remember what the preacher said to me down in your office? He was right. There is no hope for me. I am one of those who was elected before the foundations of the world were laid to go wrong and be lost."

While he was in that prison his real name was discovered. A man from the town in which he was born was going through the prison and recognized Tom. He returned to his home town and told Tom's

parents about it and they traveled to the penitentiary and talked with him. The realization that their son, who had been lost to them for so many years, was a convict and had been one of the worst outlaws in Oklahoma, overwhelmed them with grief. They went home from the prison and both died within a month. Tom wept when he told me of it.

"I am just as guilty of killing my father and mother as if I shot them to death," he said.

As I was leaving I put my hand on his shoulder and inquired:

"Tom, I want you to tell me what you did with that money you got from the bank. You say you are repentant, but there can be no true repentance without restitution."

He looked up at me, quizzically, and replied: "Mr. Sutton, I thought I might need that money some time."

I knew then that he was yet a robber at heart, in spite of all his protestations of regret and reform. I told him I was making a collection of historic firearms and asked where his revolvers were.

"They're with my other belongings," he said, and he promised to send me one of them when he was

released. He did send it, a beautiful six-shooter with stag horn handle, and this letter with it:

"According to my promise I am sending you the six-shooter I carried so long. It was given me by George Newcomb (Bitter Creek) when we worked for Mr. Halsell on the H. X. Bar ranch in the Cherokee Strip. It has twelve credits, for which I am truly sorry. Mr. Sutton, I never want to own another gun as long as I live. I have a small ranch and a few cattle in Ottawa County and am doing the best I can. I want to thank you and Mr. Tilghman for all you have done in helping me to get back, and sincerely hope you have not lost all confidence in me."

After his release I suppose he dug up his loot from the bank and bought the ranch. He lived there quietly for a while, but he returned to his old calling, robbed a bank at Ashbury, Missouri, and was shot while resisting arrest in Joplin, and died with his boots on after all. He was the last of the Doolin gang.

CHAPTER XVIII

TILGHMAN'S LAST TRAIL

As I remarked before, I knew only one man who desired to die with his boots on. That man was Bill Tilghman.

Throughout this chronicle I have spoken of him as "Bill," because that was the name by which he was known to the frontier as boy and man for more than seventy years. His friends loved him. The outlaws that were hounded by him through the greater part of his life, feared and respected and trusted him. They knew he would fight fairly and befriend them afterward, if they deserved it, and often when they did not deserve it. They frequently imposed upon his kindly nature.

Billy Tilghman was sixteen years old when he departed from Atchison, Kansas. He was in love with a girl, and she was in love with him. He went West, disappeared from her sight, and she did not hear of him, nor he from or about her until forty-five years had passed. Then he returned to Atchison on business and he decided to inquire about her. Tilghman related to me the story of what occurred.

He put up at the old Byram Hotel and the next morning he walked down the street, met a very old man and asked him:

"How long have you lived here?"

"All my life."

"Did you ever know a family named ——?"

"Yes, knew them well."

"There was a girl named Mattie. Did you know her?"

"Yes, knew her well. They are all dead but her. She is married to a prosperous farmer and lives just three miles north of town."

Tilghman returned to the hotel and called her by telephone. When a woman's voice answered he asked:

"Is this Mrs. ——?"

"Yes."

"You were Mattie ——?"

"Yes, that was my maiden name."

"This is Billy Tilghman speaking."

He heard the woman's voice, in a stifled scream: "Oh, Billy!" And then the rattle of the telephone receiver as it dropped. He walked up and down his room for a half hour and called again. A woman's voice answered and he asked:

"Is this Mattie?"

"Yes."

"This is Billy Tilghman. I want to see you. Can I come out?"

"Yes, Billy. I'll send my husband after you right away."

He told her where he was and the husband came, in his car, and he and Tilghman drove out to the farm.

The door of the farm-house was opened by an elderly woman whose hair was white, a woman greatly altered in appearance from the image of the girl Tilghman had carried in his mind and heart for forty-five years.

The three of them sat and talked, unemotionally, for a couple of hours. Tilghman told them he had been twice married and had four grown-up children. His first wife was dead and he was living happily with his second wife. Then they had dinner, and the husband took Tilghman back to the hotel.

The next morning Tilghman called her again and asked if he might see her alone.

"Yes, Billy," she answered. "My husband has gone to the other farm for cattle feed and will be

gone until late this afternoon. I want you to come out."

He went, and for two hours they sat and wept; just sat there, looking at each other, and weeping, for two solid hours. This man who was known to the outlaws of the whole Southwest as one absolutely without fear, the man the gunmen and killers of Oklahoma and Kansas dreaded above all others, sat there for two hours with tears streaming down his cheeks.

When he arose to go she said: "Billy, I've got somthing up-stairs I want to give you."

She went up-stairs and came down with a bundle wrapped in papers and as she gave it to him she said:

"Take that and do not open it until you get to your room, alone, at the hotel."

He took it to the hotel, retired to his room, unwrapped it and found a box containing nearly two thousand five hundred post-cards, each one addressed to him and each bearing to him a message of her undying love for him. He called her again by telephone and asked her about the post-cards.

"Billy," she said, "every Sunday morning of the forty-five years that you have been away I have gone

to my own room, alone, and written you a post-card, and, not knowing where to send it, I filed them all away in a box, and so they have accumulated throughout the years. I never missed a Sunday in all that time. I never had the heart to stop writing to you, and I never had the heart to destroy what I had written. I am glad you came at last so I could give them to you. And now you know it all and I shall not write any more, so, good-by forever, Billy."

He sat there, long into the night, reading them over, and weeping again. He departed from Atchison the following day and never saw her, nor heard from her again.

Telling me about it, later, he said, with moist eyes and a break in his voice:

"Longfellow's Evangeline, and her love for Gabriel, does not beat that for 'affection that hopes, and endures, and is patient—the beauty and strength of woman's devotion.' "

One day Tilghman came to me and said he had been sent for by the best people of the town of Cromwell, to go there and be its marshal, and try to restore order.

In the latter years of Tilghman's life central

Oklahoma became the richest section of the mid-continent oil field. Towns would spring up, almost overnight, and with the founding of each new oil town, crooks, thieves, bandits, moonshiners, bootleggers, panderers and human vampires, that class which lives by exploiting the weaknesses, vices and passions of others, would flock there and the embers of outlawry would blaze up.

Cromwell was one of those towns. It grew in five months from one lone cabin to an oil-boom town of thirty thousand population. It was known as the wickedest town in America. Its local police could not control its criminal element, so Tilghman was sent for, and when he laid the plan before me, I said:

"Bill, I wouldn't go. You and I must realize that we are not so young as we used to be. You are seventy-one. You are not so quick on the draw as you were. Your eyesight is failing. It's time you realized that you are an old man and must quit this battling with outlaws. You have done your share of it. And besides, this new brand of city-bred outlaw that has come up under national prohibition, the bootleggers, hi-jackers, rum runners, dope pedlers and hop-heads, are not like the old-time outlaws who had

been cowboys and had a code of honor of their own that they lived up to. These new bandits will shoot you in the back. Don't go."

"Well," answered Tilghman, "if I don't get killed in a gun fight I'll have to go to bed some day and die like a woman, and I don't want to do that. I want to go out in the smoke, and die with my boots on, as I've seen so many good men die."

He went, and soon thereafter a drunken man broke loose and Tilghman tried to quiet him. The man drew a six-shooter. Tilghman took it from him, and holding him by the right arm, and with his own six-shooter in his hand, started with him for the police station, never thinking that the fellow might have another gun; but he had one in his coat pocket. Putting his hand in and twisting it around until it bore on Tilghman, he pulled the trigger, and Tilghman dropped, killed by a drunken man.

When Tilghman was killed he had in his hand the six-shooter that Marshal Lafe Shadley had in his hand when he was shot by the outlaw, Bill Doolin, in the battle at Ingalls. Doolin had snatched this gun from the hand of Shadley as he was dying, and Doolin carried it until Tilghman arrested him in Eureka Springs.

This weapon is in my collection of historic fire-arms, and it is probably the last one that will be added to it, for the period in which the six-shooter reigned supreme in the West has come to an end, and the sound of its bark has been replaced by the call of the church-going bell.

Bill Tilghman was all but the last of that bulldog breed of old-time field marshals who risked and gave their lives to push back the borders of a wilderness. He saw and helped the Wild West become a land of peaceful farmsteads, towns, schools and churches. Where he hunted buffaloes and fought Indians and outlaws, upward of two million people live in quiet homes, in the state of Oklahoma, and when he died they placed his body, with a military guard, for three days, in the rotunda of the State Capitol. It was the only time they showed this honor to the memory of one of their private citizens.

Thirty days thereafter, Mattie, the sweetheart of his boyhood, passed away in her home near Atchison.

So, they went out together on the last long trail.

THE END

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